The Art of FINDING NEMO

To the crew of *Finding Nemo*, who created the beautiful world of this film. Thank you for jumping into the waters with us; this book is dedicated to you and your families.

Andrew Stanton, writer-director
Graham Walters, producer

[Contents]

Forewords

Andrew Stanton is my colleague, friend, and creative collaborator at Pixar. During *A Bug's Life*, he started toying with an idea for a feature film. "Well, tell me, tell me, tell me," I said. "No, let me think about this for a little while," he answered. Finally he got to the point where he said, "I'm going to tell you this story I've been thinking about." He continued with an incredible one-hour story pitch that was riveting, emotional, funny—a story about a father and son. It was just amazing and I was strapped to my seat. After the pitch he said, "John, what do you think?" I said, "You had me at the word *fish*."

John Lasseter

executive producer

above:
Ronnie del Carmen
digital

opposite:
Ronnie del Carmen
pastel and ink, 9½ x 5"

I grew up in Massachusetts, by the sea, and I remember going to my family dentist, who had this funky fish tank in his office. All kids are attracted to aquariums, and I remember staring at this tank and thinking what a weird view of the world this must be for the fish—it'd be like flying into Las Vegas and that's your first view of America. I assumed, when I was a child, that all fish in tanks were originally from the ocean and wanted to go back home.

In 1993, I took my son Ben, who was one year old, to Marine World, where they'd opened this fish exhibit that had a tunnel with a massive glass wall. I'd never scuba dived at that point, but if you stood close to the glass, you got the feeling of being underwater with all these tropical fish. This was two

years before Toy Story, when people were questioning whether audiences would even sit through a computer graphics (CG) feature. But I remember, even then, thinking how in CG we could make an underwater world, that CG would be the perfect medium for that world.

The idea stayed on the back burner as I worked on the slate of Pixar productions that followed the success of Toy Story—and waited for the spark that'd finally fire up the gestating idea. I had the environment and the situation, but the idea didn't kick into gear until I came up with something that mattered to me emotionally.

The final piece fell into place when Ben was about five years old and I took him for a walk to the park to have some father/son time. It was only two blocks away, but the whole time I kept saying, "Don't touch that . . . be careful . . . stay away from the curb—cars!" I suddenly became aware of what I was doing. I thought about the dilemma of being a parent and having protective instincts that can consume you and keep you from being the interactive parent your child needs you to be. The premise I concluded with was "Fear denies a good father from being one." That conflict intrigued me and sparked the idea of making a story that focused on the parent, not the child. That walk to the park with my son really connected the dots, and from 1999 on I got serious about making Finding Nemo.

So, it's been a long journey from my dentist's office until now, with many incredible artists joining up along the way to help turn this little fish idea into a reality. This book is a tribute to their amazing talents, and a peek into how it takes a sea of visionaries to make a single vision possible. Enjoy.

Andrew Stanton
writer-director

Introduction

by Mark Cotta Vaz

Across the Bay from San Francisco, in the town of Emeryville and on the former site of the Oakland Oaks baseball field and most recently Del Monte Plant 35, a different kind of factory opened its doors after the Thanksgiving holiday of 2000—a story factory, the home of Pixar Animation Studios. Pixar has been releasing feature-length computer animated films (commonly called CG films) since Toy Story in 1995, but the company founders first encountered the mysteries of computer animation when it was sequestered in university labs and locked away in corporate think tanks. It took years of research and development before they uncorked the magical digital genie and made it tell stories. And that genie keeps exponentially growing, promising ever more creative possibilities.

Stepping inside Pixar Animation Studios, one enters an atrium that looks like a Machine Age train station and forms a cathedral of space, with sunshine filtering through vaulting skylights and glass walls. Above the lobby floor, at each end, two bridges (including one dramatically arching span from which the company has held paper-plane flying contests) connect the upper level's east side and west side. To traverse the vast atrium and its ground level and upper corridors, many Pixar employees favor gliding around on scooters and skateboards (and one wonders if Buzz Lightyear rocket shoes might propel them in the future).

If the atrium is, as the company planned, the living room, then the animator's area is the playroom, a place where creativity is unleashed even in office and hallway decor, decorated with an exotic Tiki theme, a general store, and a corner office fashioned into a castle wall and turret. An aquarium in the corridor, stocked with tropical fish, fits right in but also served as reference for the fish characters of Finding Nemo, Pixar's fifth feature, released in partnership with Walt Disney Pictures.

Flitting near the tank's surface are two orange and white striped clownfish, the species that inspired the characters of little Nemo and his overprotective dad, Marlin, known to the production as Father. In the film, Nemo gets scooped up by a diver and taken from his coral reef home to a fish tank in a dentist's office overlooking the harbor of Sydney, Australia, and Father must brave the dangers of the deep to find his son. In the tank there is also a delicate slice of fluorescent blue, a regal blue tang that stars as the daffy, memory-challenged Dory. In the Pixar tradition of buddies (ranging from the Toy Story duo of Woody and Buzz to the furry giant Sulley and one-eyed Mike of Monsters, Inc.), Father and Dory are partners in the epic search for Nemo.

It is in this playroom that the artists of Pixar churn out reams of concept art and storyboards that in turn define the look of the movie's characters and environment, and explores the emotional underpinnings. As the marathon run of years it takes to make an animated film narrows to the final months, this artwork disappears, gradually replaced by the visions from the 3-D world.

Although concept artists, because of early deadline pressures, often must start work without a complete script in hand, the Finding Nemo team had the luxury of beginning after Andrew Stanton had completed his first draft. "He was so great

line art by Dan Lee

about wanting to board his script and look at it in its full ninety minutes with temporary music and dialogue, in what's called the "story reel,'" smiled Pixar veteran and *Nemo* production designer Ralph Eggleston (whose directorial debut for the animated Pixar short *For the Birds* was honored with the 2001 Academy Award® for Best Animated Short Film). "Showing his dirty laundry," Andrew calls it. He wanted to quickly see if this was a movie he felt strongly about—and it was. Then, the production began rolling and everybody started jumping on the train. We call it 'the Process.' Trust the Process."

Some of the artists worked with digital tools, such as the paint programs favored by shader art director Robin Cooper, who helped define the color palette used by the CG artists. Randy Berrett, one of the environment art directors, often created a pencil sketch, scanned it into the computer, and, with Photoshop software, experimented by resizing the drawing or adding layers of texture and color. The concept work was even aided by previsualization, in which low-resolution, 3-D characters and environments provide for a scene's rough layout, scale, and camera work. For *Nemo*, this tool was particularly vital in helping the artists discover, at the outset, potential problems and design possibilities for the environments of Sydney Harbor and the dentist's fish tank. But, as John Lasseter, one of Pixar's founders and *Nemo* executive producer, declared, "At Pixar, we're not digital purists." The final movie would be computer generated, but in the field of concept art and storyboards, which begins with limitless blue sky, the quickest route

to an idea is still humble pencil and paper, such as the *Nemo* story department's hand-drawn storyboards, or the pastel paintings and charcoal pencil sketches the art department produced for mood, lighting, and color possibilities.

At the heart of the work was the symbiotic relationship between the two departments, story and art, an aspect of the Process that hails from animation's Golden Age. "Developing an animated film at Pixar is no different than it was at Disney in the days of *Snow White*," said story artist Jason Katz. "The story and art departments develop the film in tandem. In story, we'll start with the script and draw up specific shots and camera placements that the editorial department will take and combine with sound and music for the story reel, which is a living representation of the film."

"I worked on both story and art for *Nemo* and the main difference is the story department is concerned with the broad strokes of sequences, while the art department is detail and project oriented," added story artist/designer Peter Sohn. "In art you might have several weeks to work out every detail of what a piece of clothing looks like. In story you're constantly working out problems and changes, like worrying about Nemo's relationships with the tank gang or figuring out how Father and Dory fit into Nigel's (pelican) beak, breathe water, and escape from a horde of seagulls and still be exciting."

Finding Nemo, with its underwater world and a fish father's odyssey across the ocean to find his lost son, had a particular lure for Pixar creators. For Eggleston and director of photography Sharon

Calahan, the potential included the chance to evoke the glorious animation of the past. "We'd always wanted to do a CG animated film that looked like it was made in 1940, the three-strip Technicolor films where there were soft edges to things and a very soft look," Eggleston explained. "*Bambi*, with its watercolor look, was also an inspiration—let detail fall away, go off into the murk of the ocean. We wouldn't do that on *Toy Story*, because it's a film about toys and plastic. But *Finding Nemo*, with its underwater setting, allowed us to do something we always wanted to do."

"Every movie starts with a basic idea," Lasseter added. "When Andrew first pitched the idea to me, he showed some images of real fish and described this very personal father-and-son story. One of the things we pride ourselves on in our films is matching a subject matter to our medium, and to me, *Finding Nemo* is one of the best blendings of an idea with a medium. In bringing this underwater world to life, so much of it looks realistic, but it's also so stylized. There have been some great underwater sequences in animation history, but this is unlike any underwater animation that's been done."

And it was concept art that conjured the characters, that defined the stylized realism of coral reefs, the foreboding vastness of open ocean, and the dentist's crowded fish tank. But the artists knew that, ultimately, after an idea had gone through seemingly endless iterations and been approved for production, it would undergo a new metamorphosis as it took three-dimensional form.

"We can't solve all the performance issues in the story reel," story supervisor Ronnie del Carmen noted. "In the story department, we'll make sure ideas are implicit and won't be lost, but after that, the animators kick in. After all, if animators just slavishly represent the reel, you'd have characters hitting very basic poses. Animators have great latitude to find quirks and nuances in a character that'll bring it alive, to discover things that we story artists couldn't get to in the story reel. Something as simple as a quick double take or a blink can get a laugh or elicit an emotional reaction."

"Once we start building a 3-D environment in the computer and moving the [digital] camera around, it's not unlike a location scout for a live-action shoot," noted *Nemo* producer Graham Walters. "At that point, we're not defining ourselves by what was drawn beforehand, but what we can find in 3-D.

"At Pixar we do hold our hands pretty close to the flame in terms of entertaining story changes," Walters laughed. "You never know when a good idea will pop up, and if it'll make the movie better, we always want to accommodate that."

"No one has a lock on ideas—the best idea is what goes in. I may look at a storyboard and get an idea for an additional visual gag, while a story artist might come up with a great bit of dialogue to go with his storyboards. It's a very organic process, a shared experience," said writer Bob Peterson.

"And despite that chasm between 2-D artwork and 3-D animation, the two worlds are linked. We'll develop a character and then take it into a clay sculpture, which occasionally gets digitized to make a 3-D model," noted character art director Ricky Nierva. "My job is to make sure that the life

and essence of that [approved concept] sketch is in that computer model. It's a big jump from 2-D to 3-D, to get what's in our heads into the heads of the CG modelers."

"Concept art is your touchstone for everything, that's why it bleeds into the actual production," Stanton added. "I'm not going forward on a production until I have that security blanket of at least a sketch of what the end product will hopefully feel like when it's all done. I don't see how it'd be possible to make any movie—let alone the movies we make—without concept art."

Pixar honored the crucial role of concept art when, upon completion of its new facility, select pieces of Monsters, Inc. conceptual art were blown up to wall size to decorate the skylit atrium. And upstairs, across the bridges linking the east side to the west side, framed concept paintings and storyboards from Pixar productions make corridors into art galleries—and a continual source of inspiration.

This book culls a sampling of the thousands of individual pieces of Finding Nemo concept art, so that those from the wide world outside the atrium can view the art show, too—so that the world can see the creative inspirations that evolved into moving pictures.

In the final analysis, making a computer animated feature is about powering up the imagination along with the processing of megabytes. "We've reduced the way we work at Pixar to this phrase: 'The art challenges technology and the technology inspires the art,'" said John Lasseter, smiling. "It's this wonderful yin and yang."
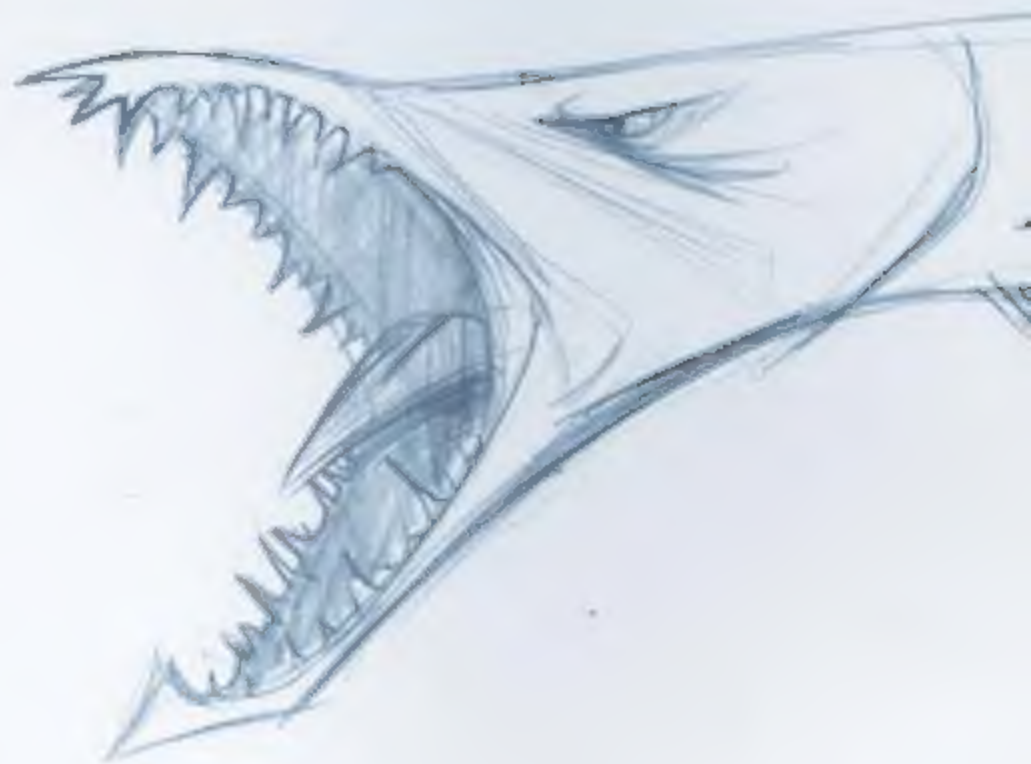
1 LEAVING HOME

Ralph Eggleston

Jeff Richards
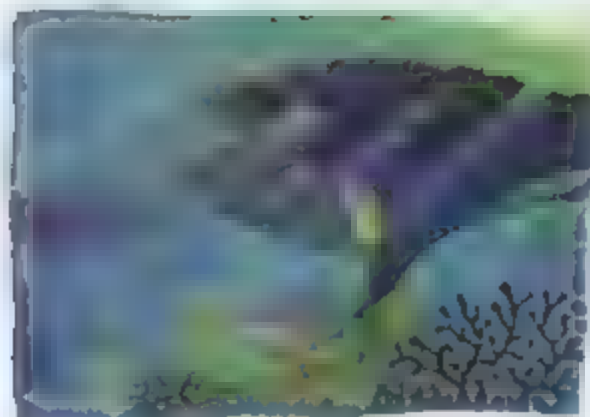
Andrew Stanton

Bruce Zick

Robin Cooper

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Nelson Boho

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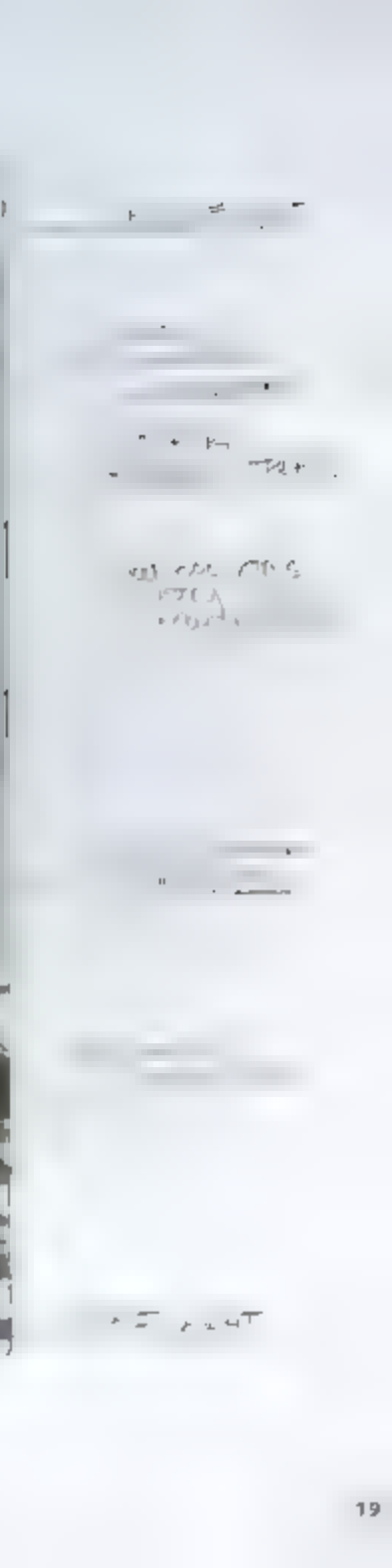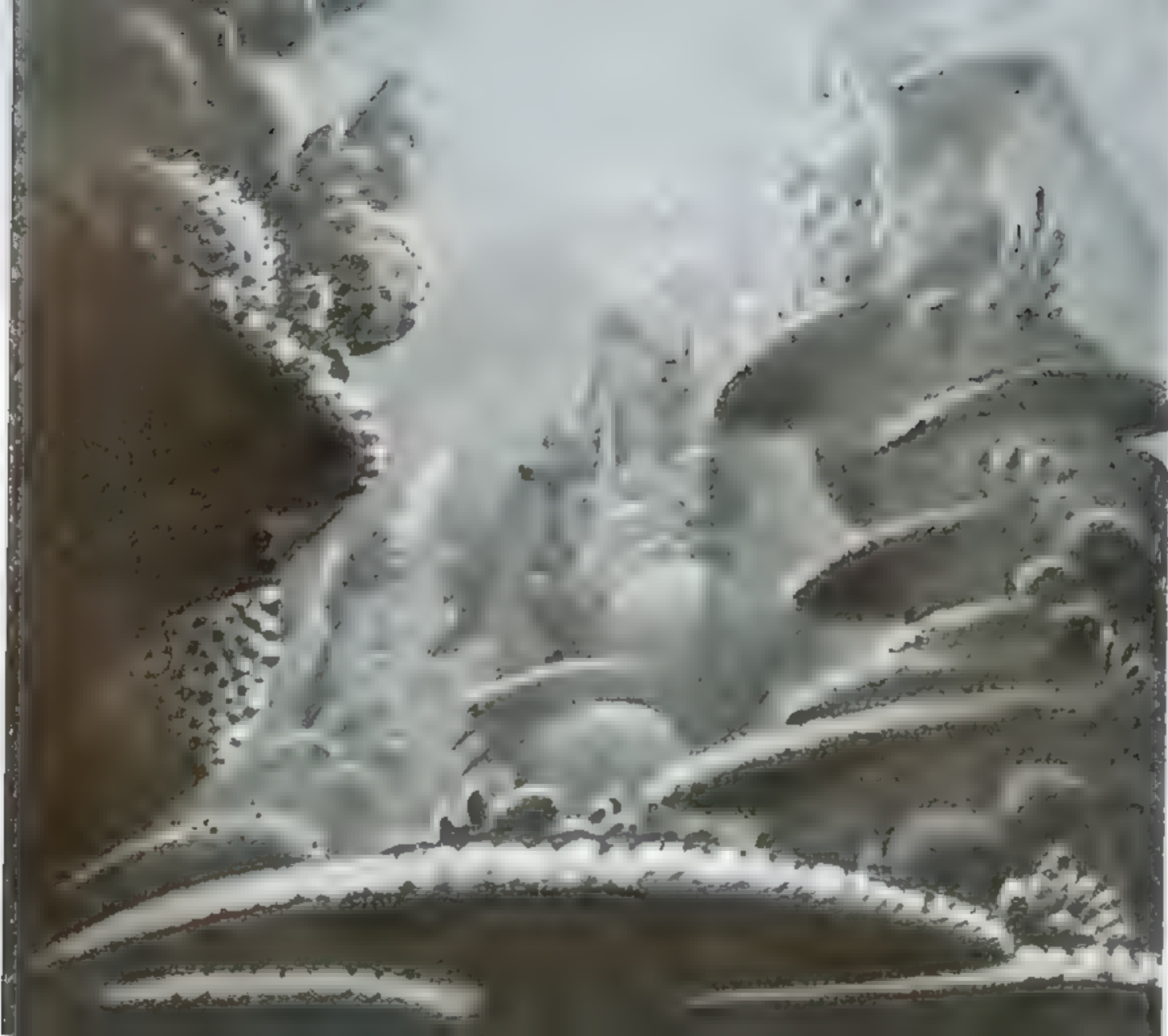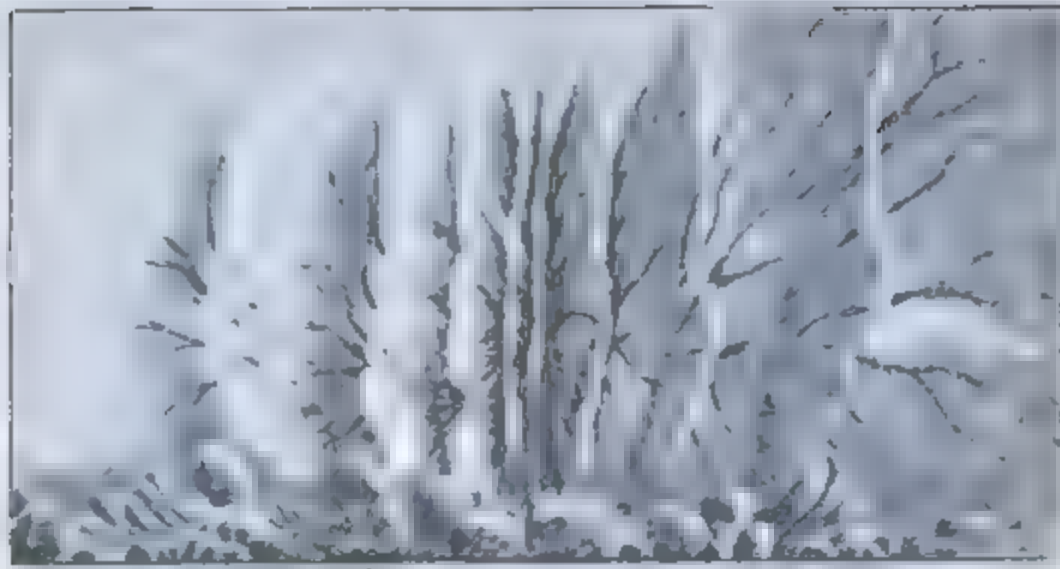
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Bruce Zick

Sharon Calahan
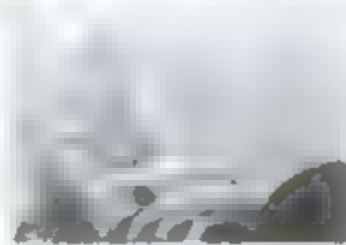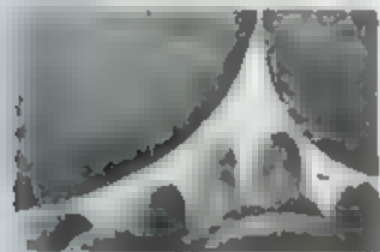
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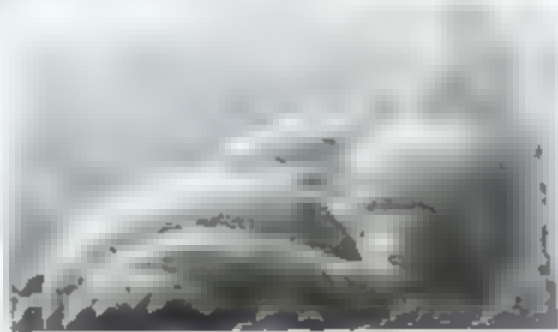
top
Bruce Zick

bottom
Bruce Zick

right
Bruce Zick

below, left to right
David S. Fulp

Nelson Bohol

Nelson Bohol
color pencil, 8" x 11"

Nelson Bohol

Andrew Stanton
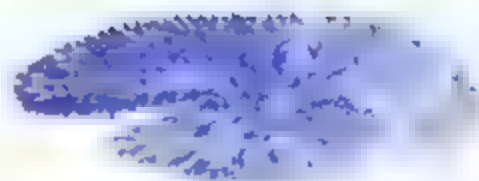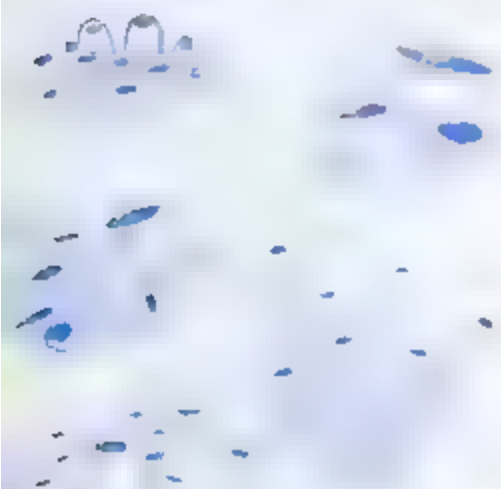
When we started making the movie, Ralph and
Andrew had to think a lot about how to design
a coral reef. It wasn't about us diving in and
sketching a coral reef had more interesting, and
so, but a higher level of coming up with a strat-
egy for creating that world. Ultimately, what you
have to do in animation — any kind of filmmaking
really — is direct the audience's eyes to where you
want them to go to at a particular moment in time...

Graham Walters

producer

SEA WEED
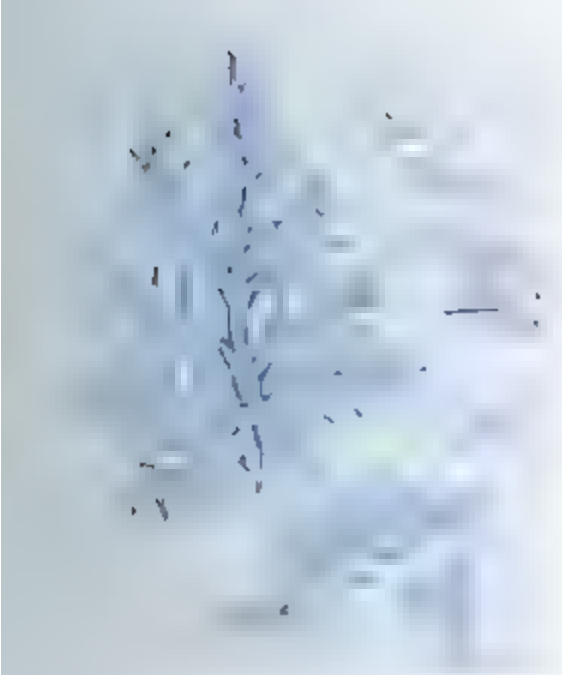
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Ralph Eggleston

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Ralph Eggleston

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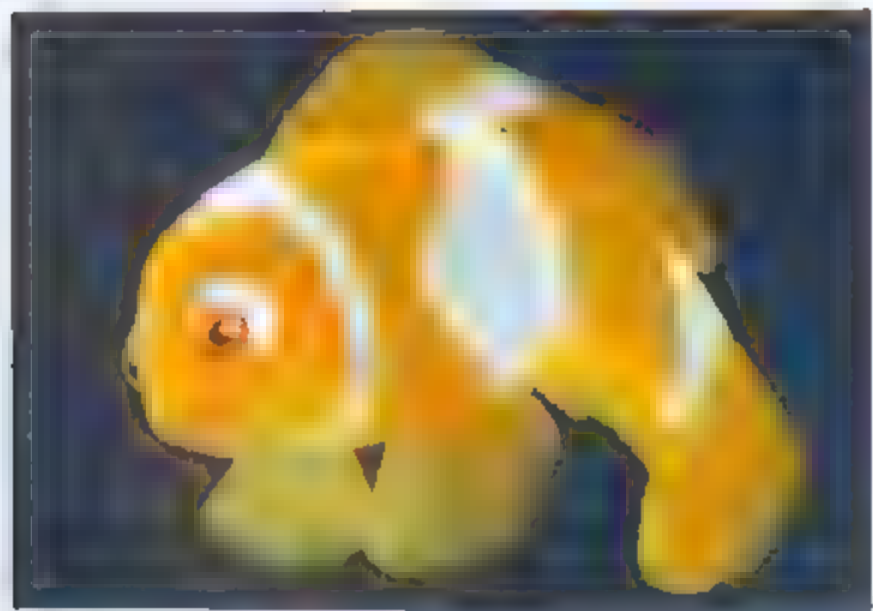
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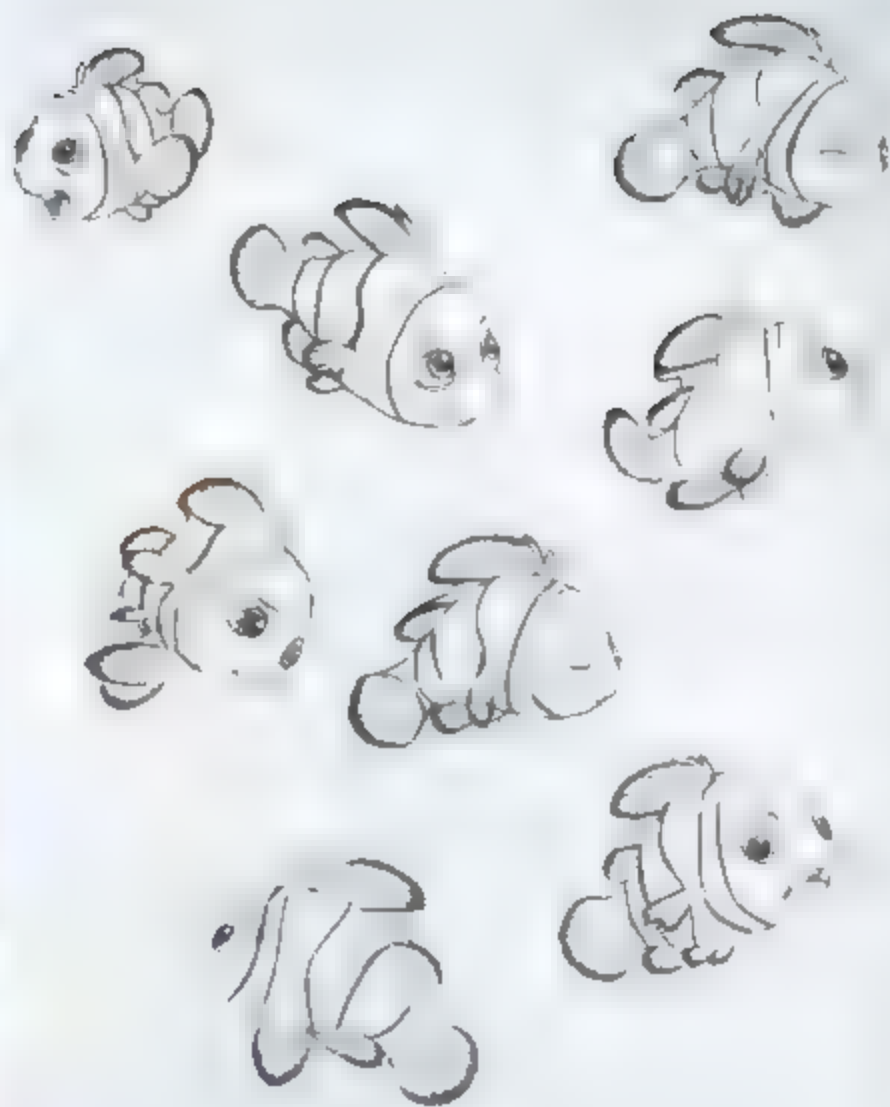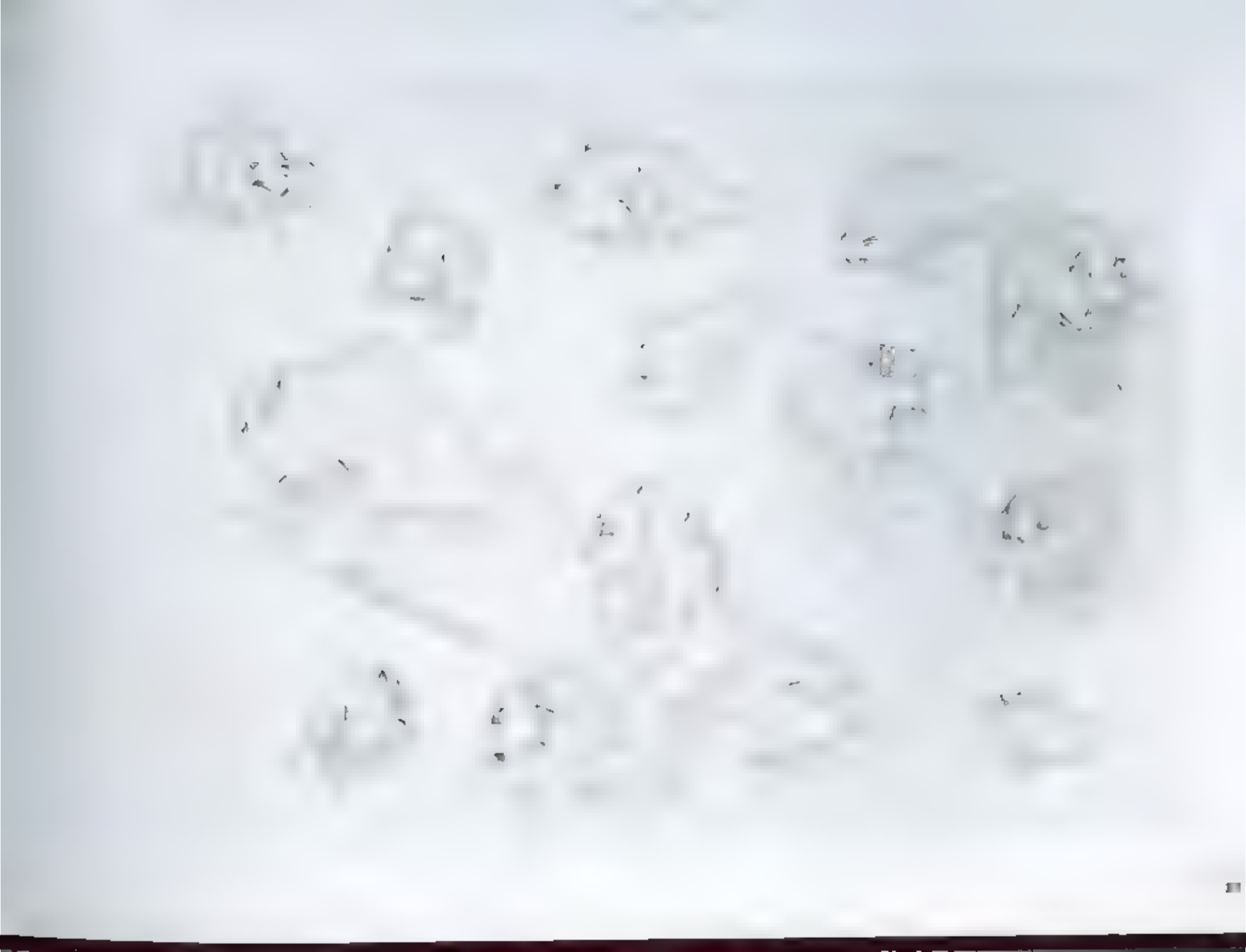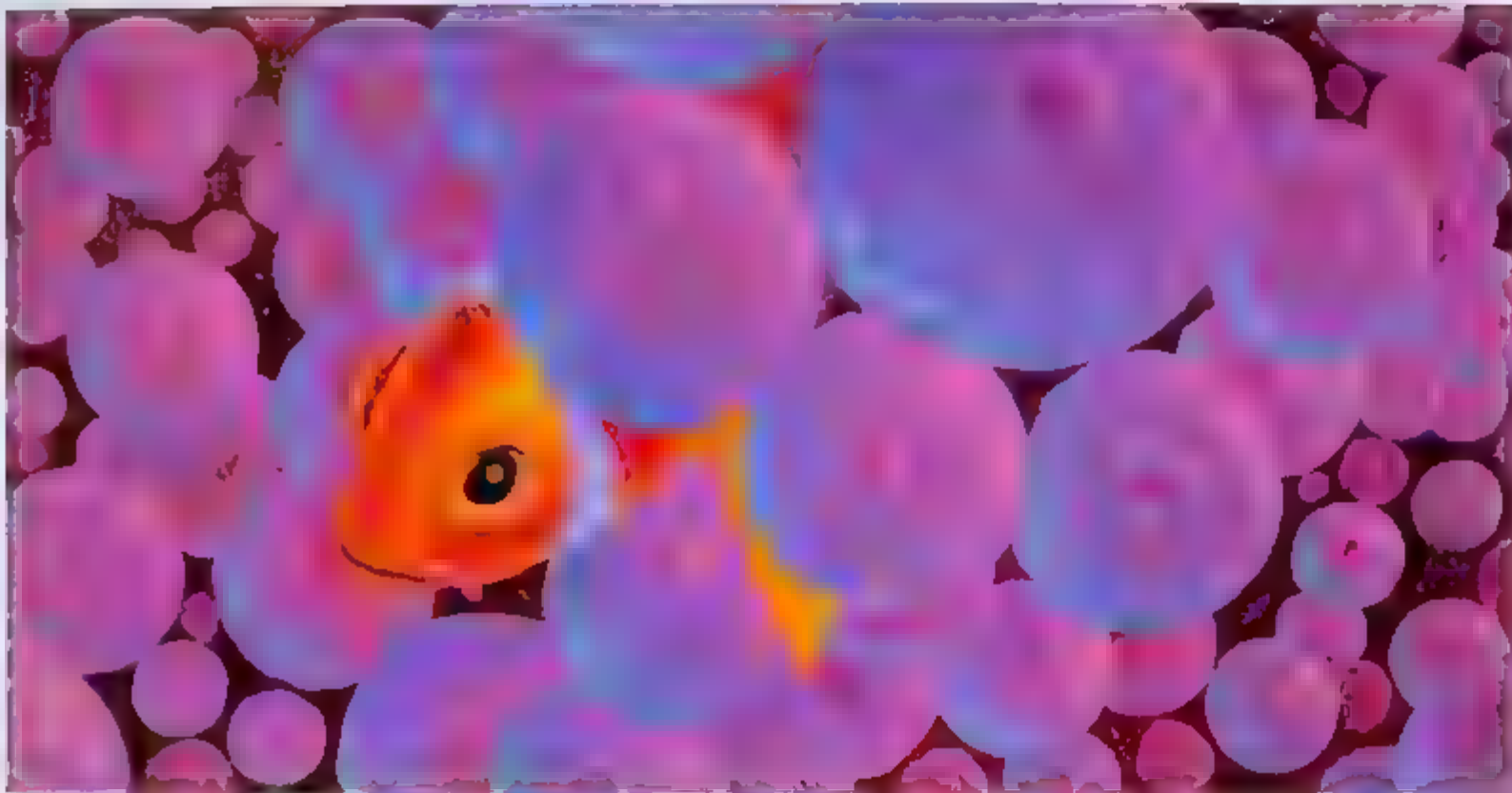
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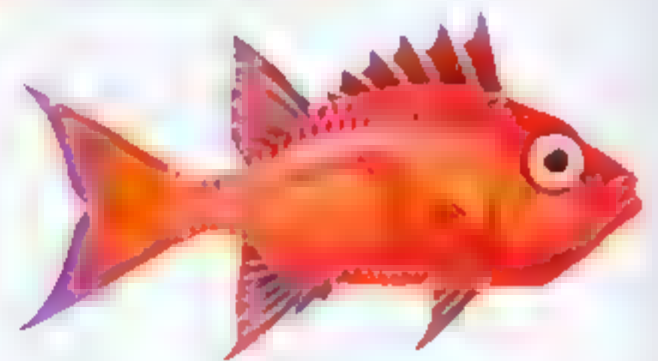
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John Lasseter

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Belinda Van Valkenburg

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Dan Lee

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Dan Lee

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Simon Varela

Graham Walters

Dan Lee

Simon Varela
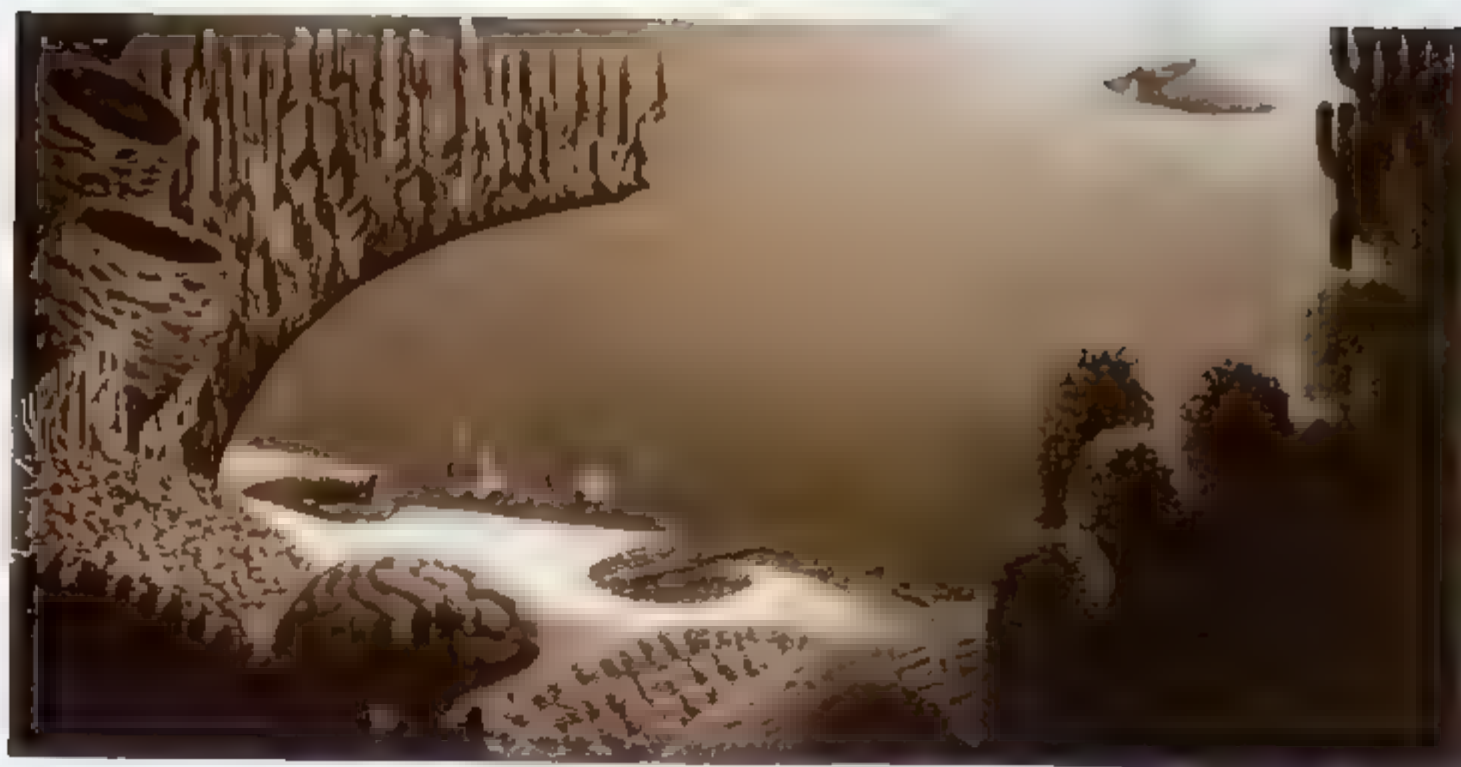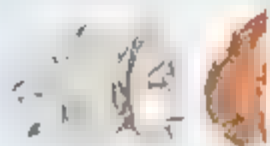
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Ralph Eggleston
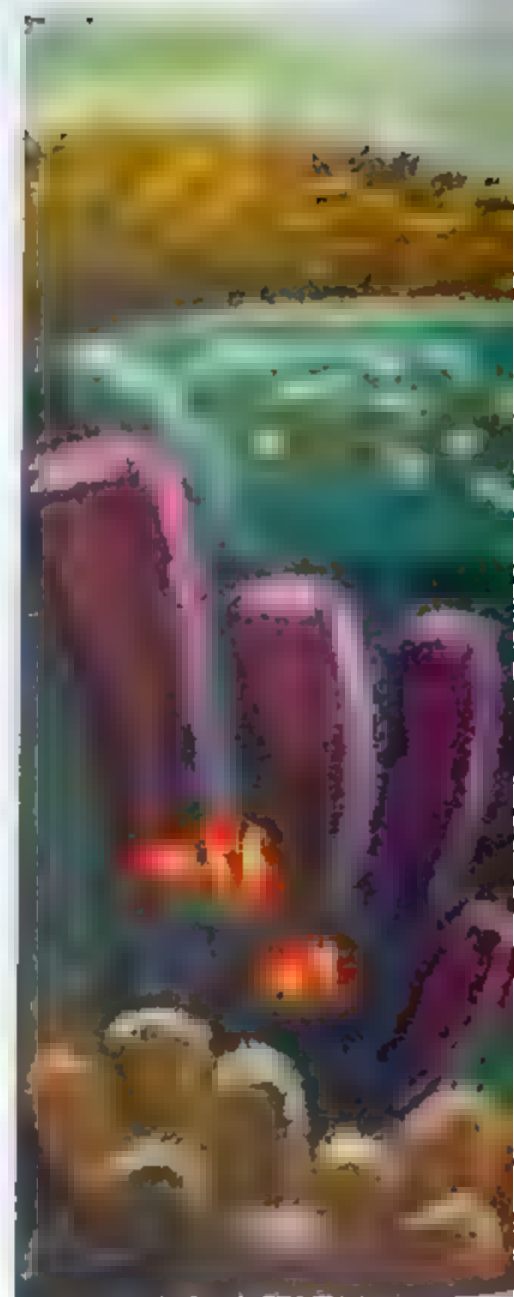
Ralph Eggleston

Lee Unkrich

director on
Ralph Eggleston
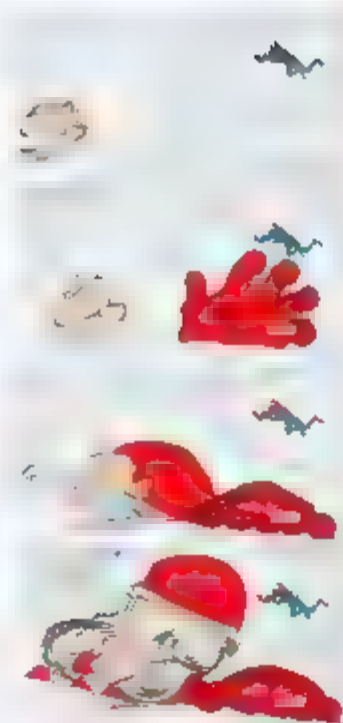
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Nathan Stanton

far right
Randy Berrett

above:
Ricky Nierva

right:
Brett Coderre

Andrew Stanton

A lot of attention went into creating the surface of

missing or too present, the audience might

Those early tests was different
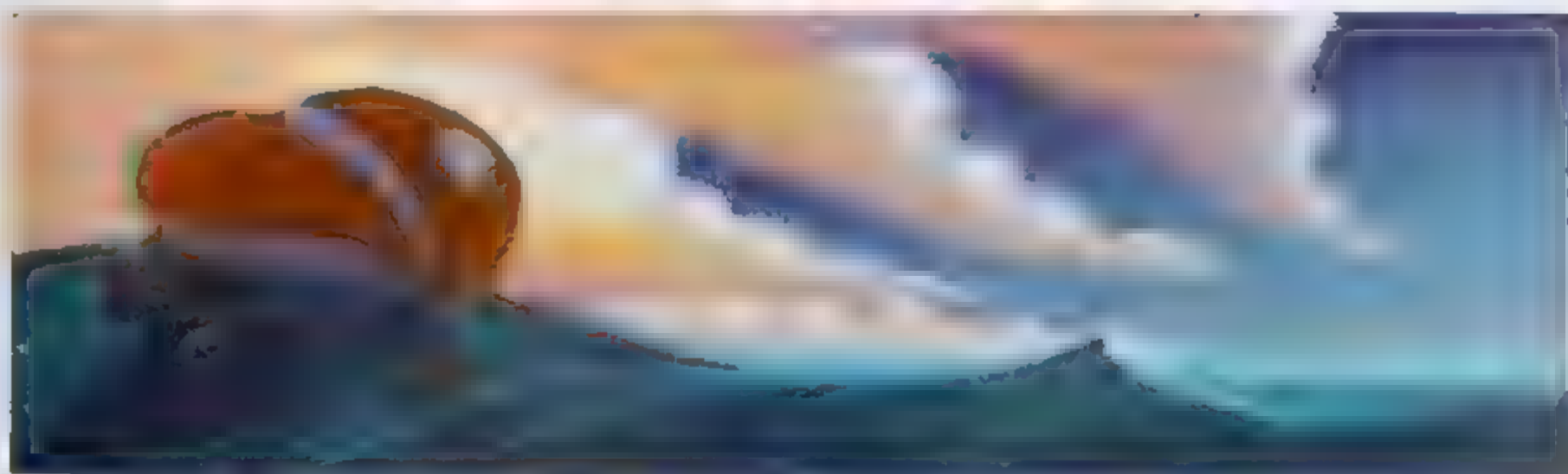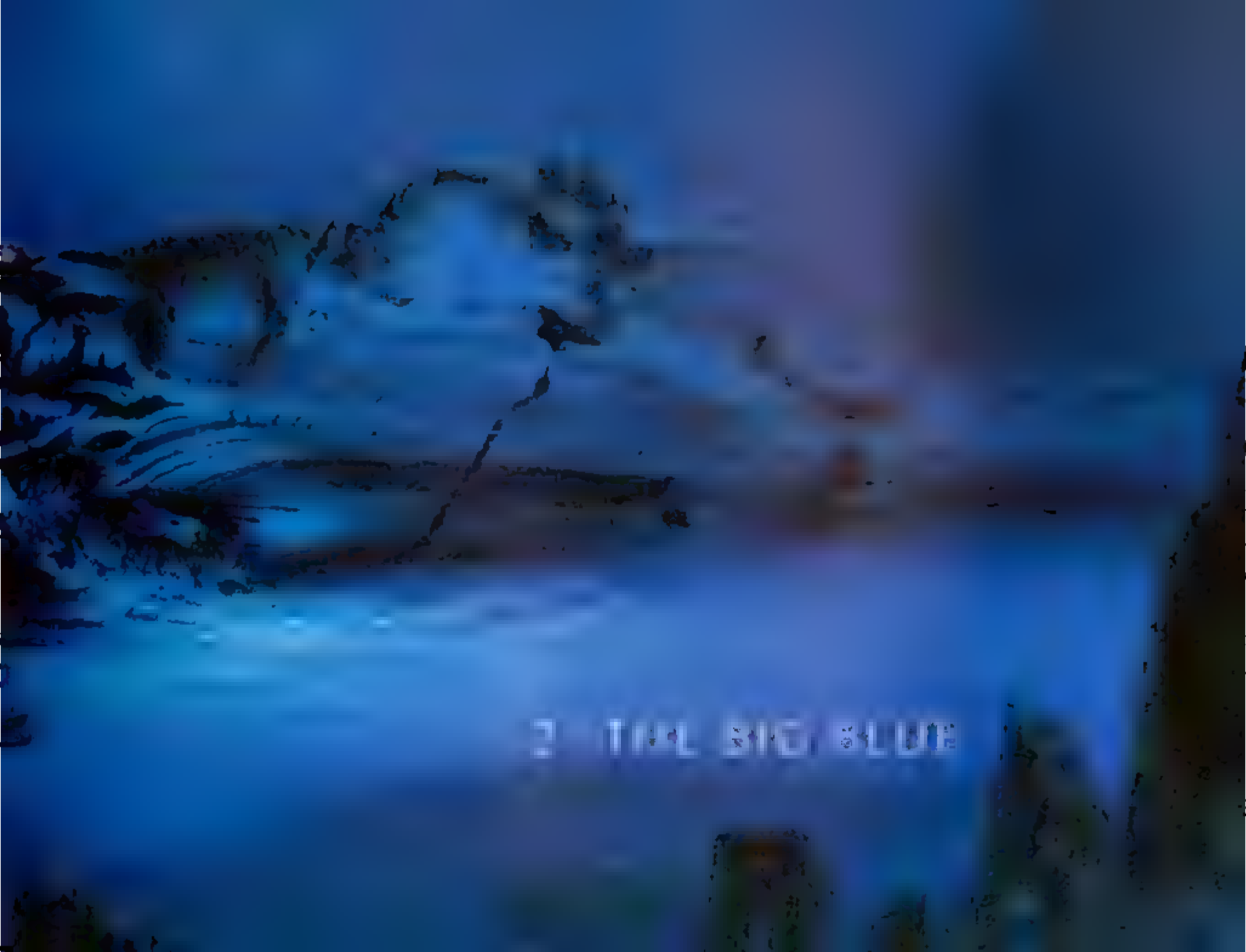
Oren Jacob

2. THE BIG BLUE

Ra ph Egg eston

Randy Berrett

S món Varela

Andrew Stanton

Anthony Christov

When you're designing environments, children to explore, you want even down in the corners. It's like when you're building a house, structure on the...

...discover it, you build just that's you're leaving the hot not designing the characters.

Anthony Christov

Anthony Christov
color pencil 10" x 13"

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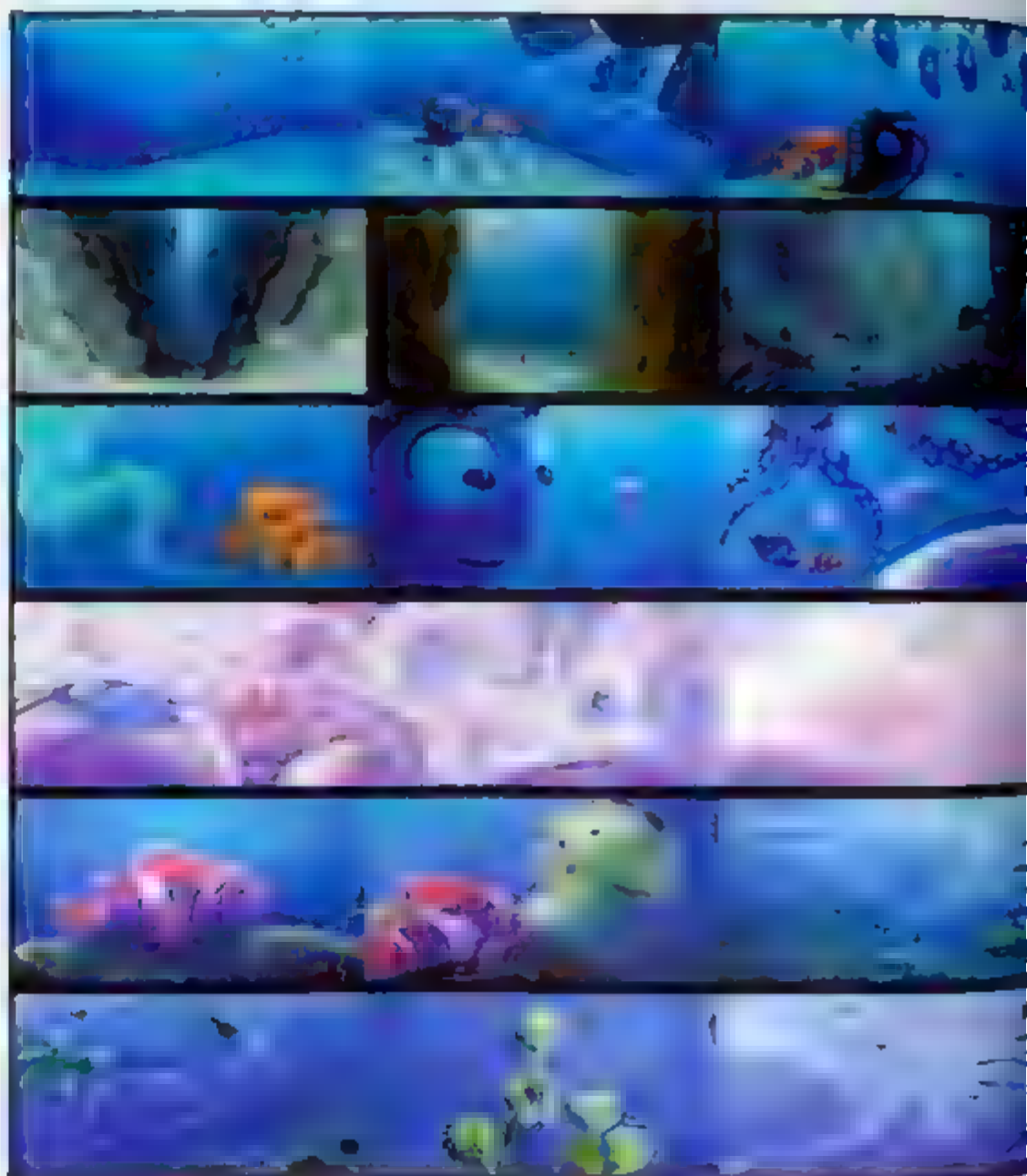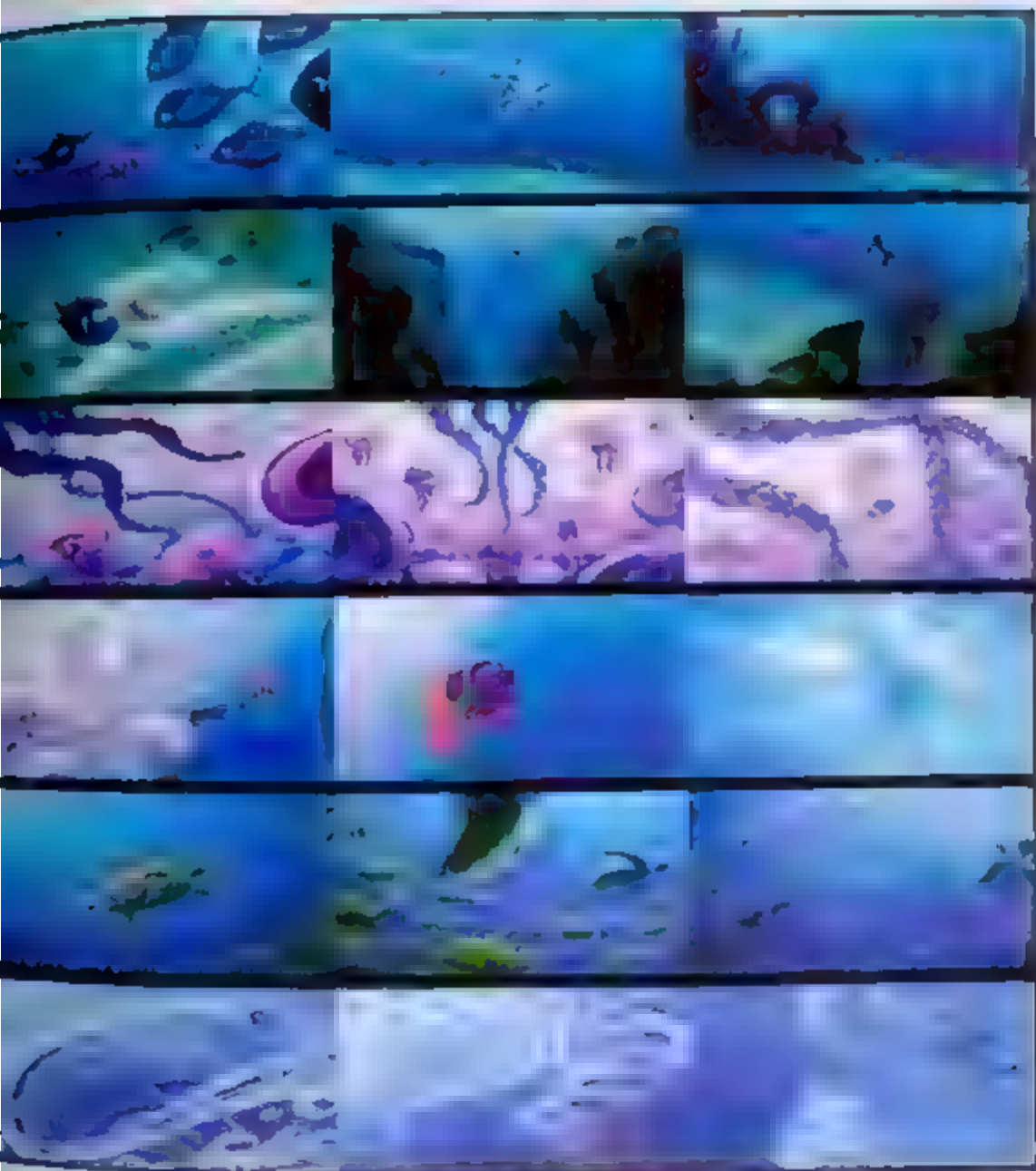
Anthony Christov

above right

Anthony Christov

Andrew Stanton

Simon Varela

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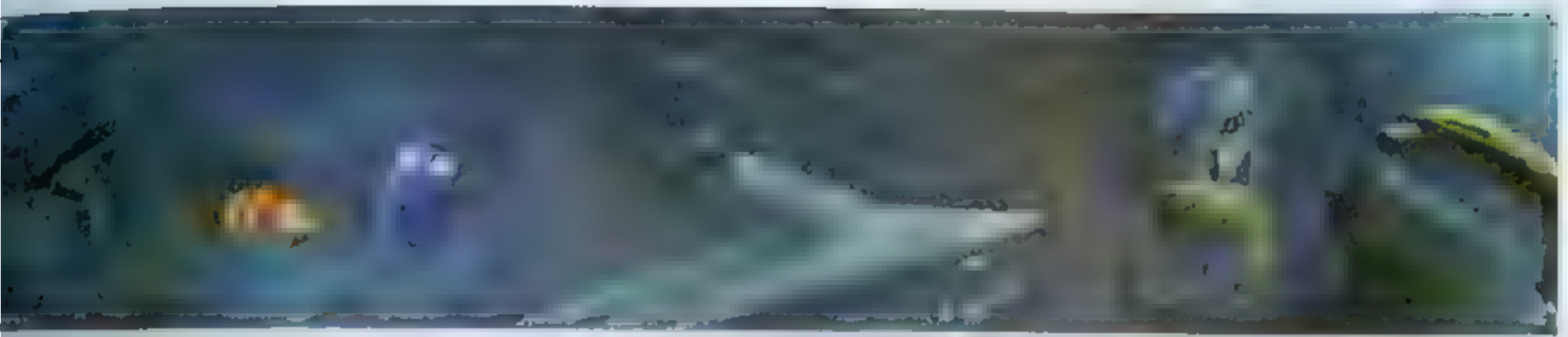
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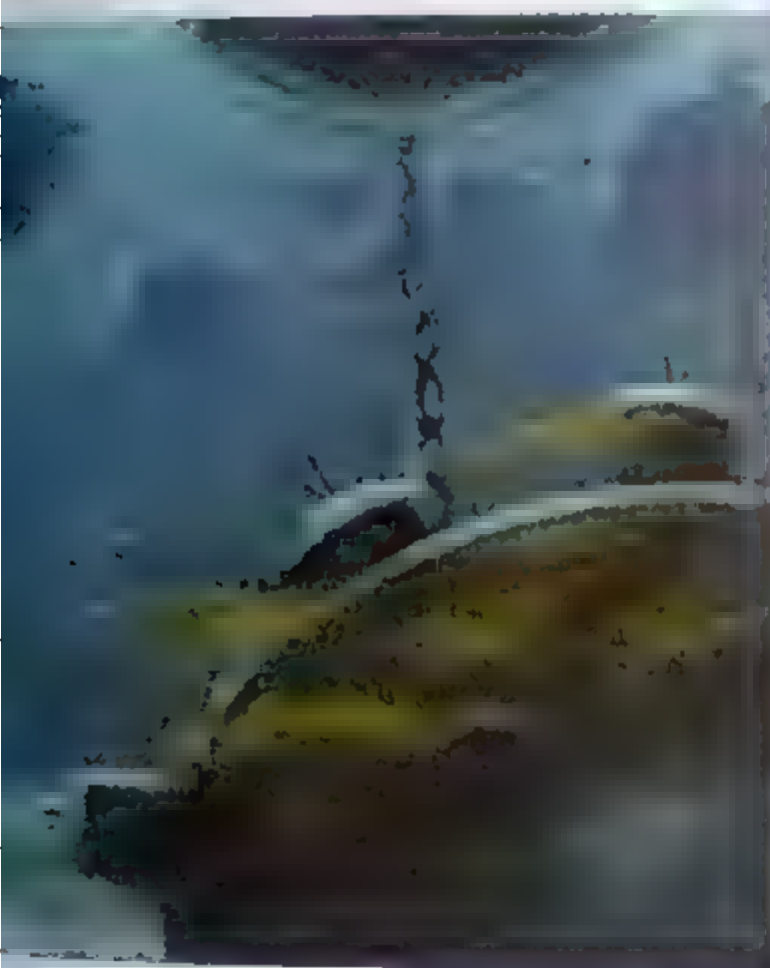
Ralph Eggleston

Sharon Calahan
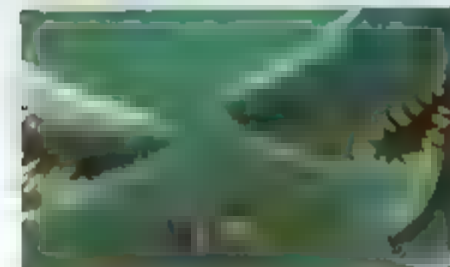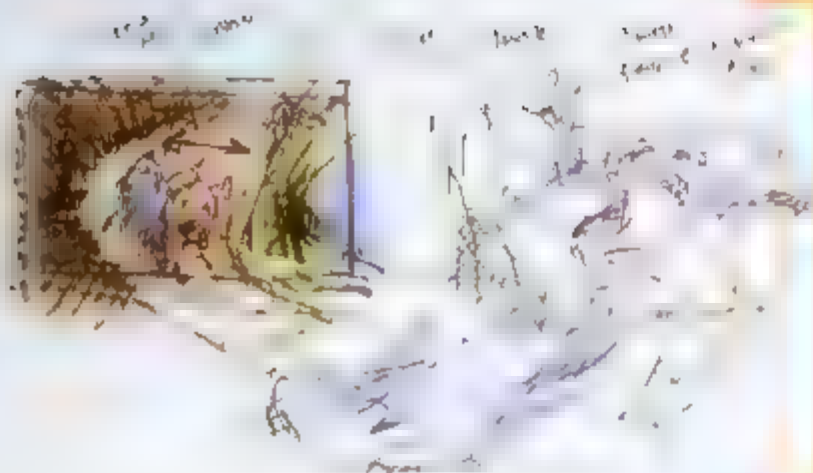
above
Andrew Stanton
...

right
...

...dodge Bruce's attack...
...The other sharks grab...

...OR
Save yourselves! Get out of here

Dory and father swim for their lives, but are encumbered by ...

... Goes after them, his jaws ...
...hungry shark makes a final ...

...nd Dory dash into a SMALL CAVE. Use the ... ... the entrance (and side in

...against the metal barrier ...
...t Father and Dory YELP WITH FRIGHT. An ... ... heard outside apolog...ing profusely

...HER FAMILY
We're sorry!... Don't take it personally! ..Bruce really doesn't mean

...ry looks at Father

A warm inviting sun rises over the open wa...

The CAMERA LOWERS INTO THE OCEAN

...EEP - CONTINUOUS

Fish busily swim through the shafts of sunlight streaming ... above, performing their daily duties of ... group ... and seeking a mate. An ongoing parade ...

... He looks happy

Lee Unkrich

Jim Capobianco

James S. Baker

Finding Nemo

GREAT WHITE

5 mon Varela

Simon Vrea

From earliest pencil sketch images of sharks, I didn't want to render a nice, clean... I wanted to capture how scary they are. Nature made them into the fastest, most streamlined shape, a powerful machine with razor sharp teeth that can go from... to forty in less than two seconds. So I was surprised at this addition. Movie sharks... mouths are friendly, so after developing these powerful sharks, I worked out their... other qualities like their smiles full of sharp teeth.

As I was always thinking... and as I was... of sharks together with ink and marker, I explored their group dynamics. Bruce the great white shark is so big that he doesn't have to work too hard to be scary. Anchor the hammerhead leads a maximum security... and as a... Big Chum the mako shark is the smallest and always has to compensate. Like real makos, which have so many needs, they can't close their mouths. Chum has too many needs. His jaw is also has a bunch of scars and a fishing hook stuck in his mouth like a pierced...

Ricky Nierva
character art director

left
Ricky Nierva
...

opposite
Albert Lozano
pencil 14 x 9
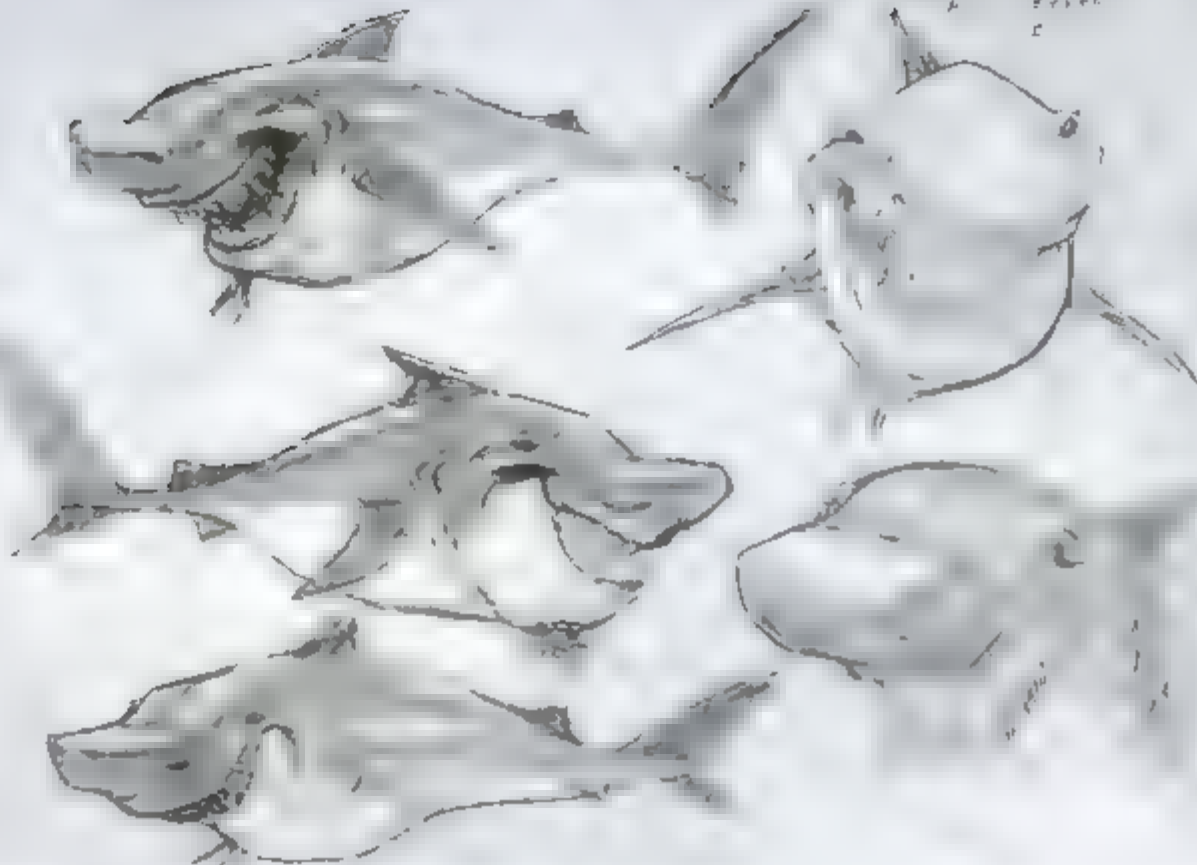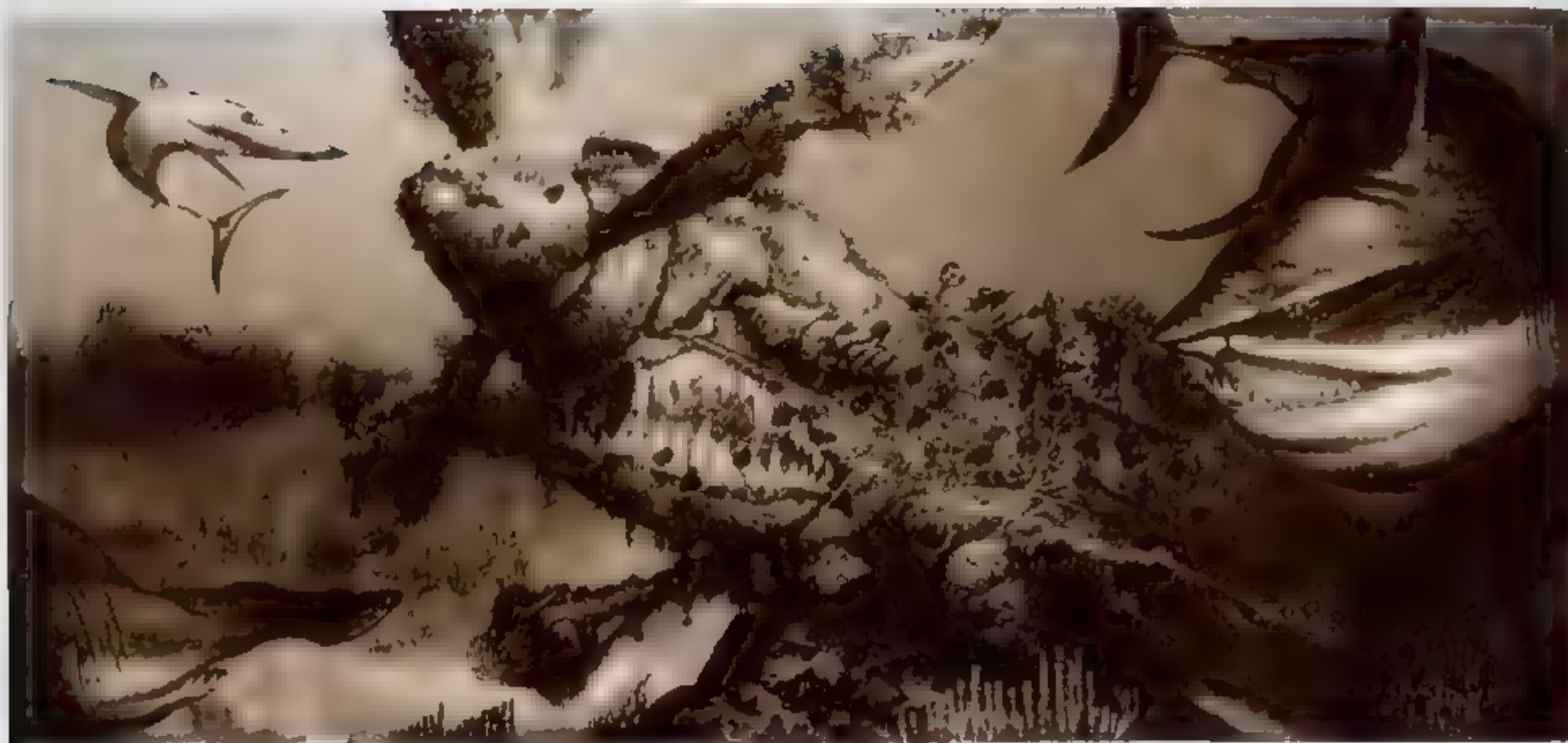
MORE A FEW BROKEN
TEETH (DAMAGE TO
SOME OF THE TEETH

Sharon Calahan

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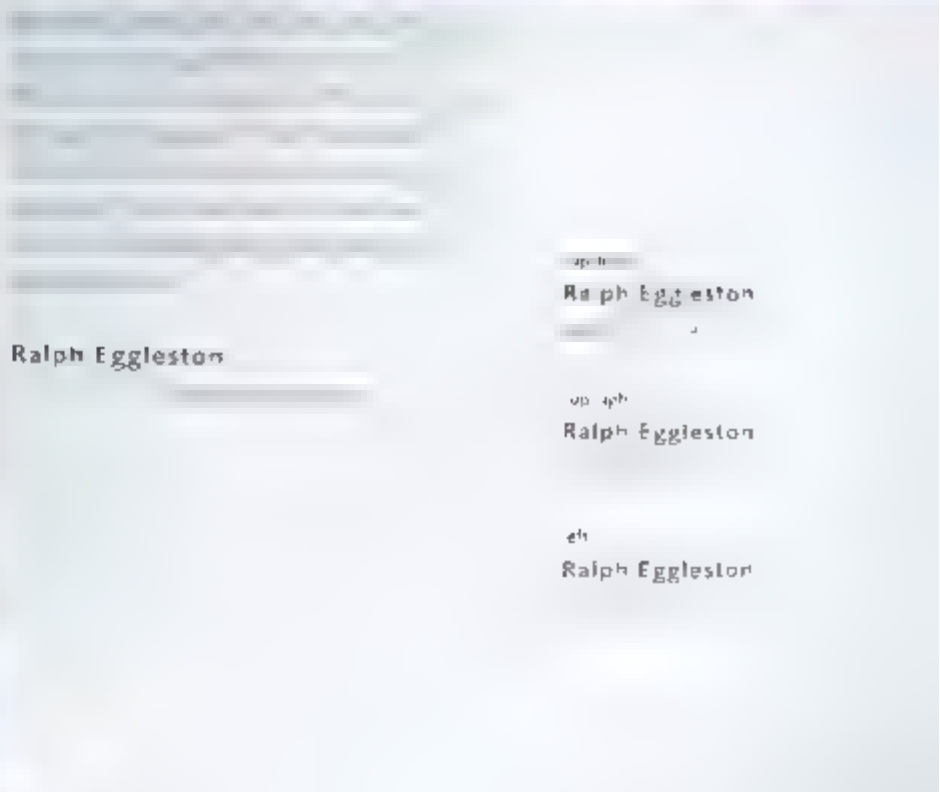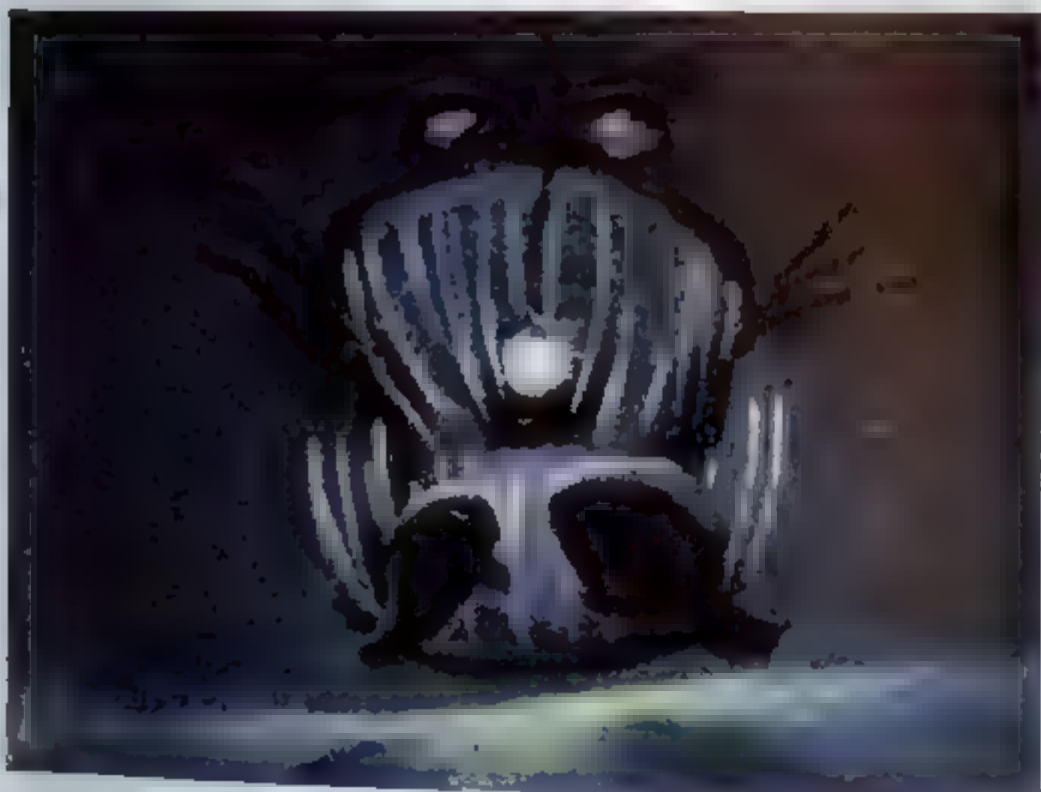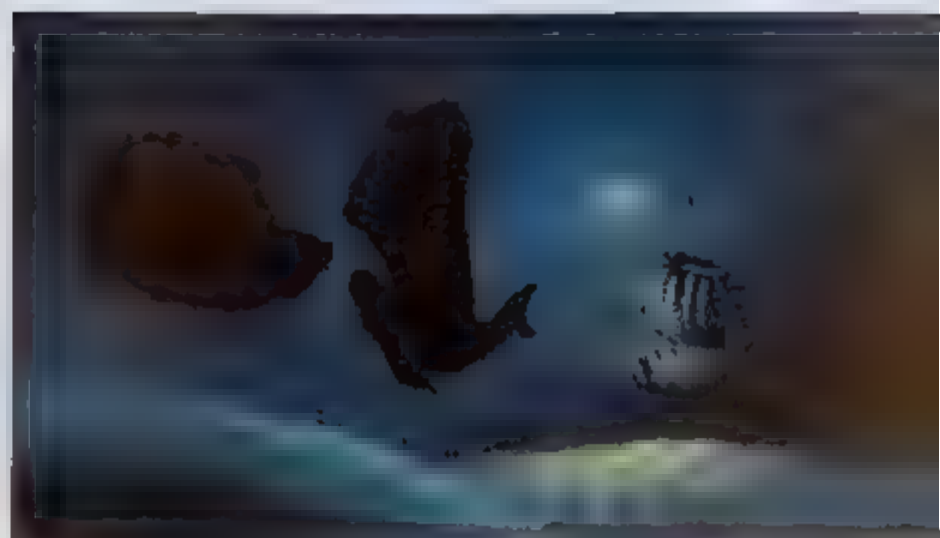
Ralph Eggleston

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Randy Berrett
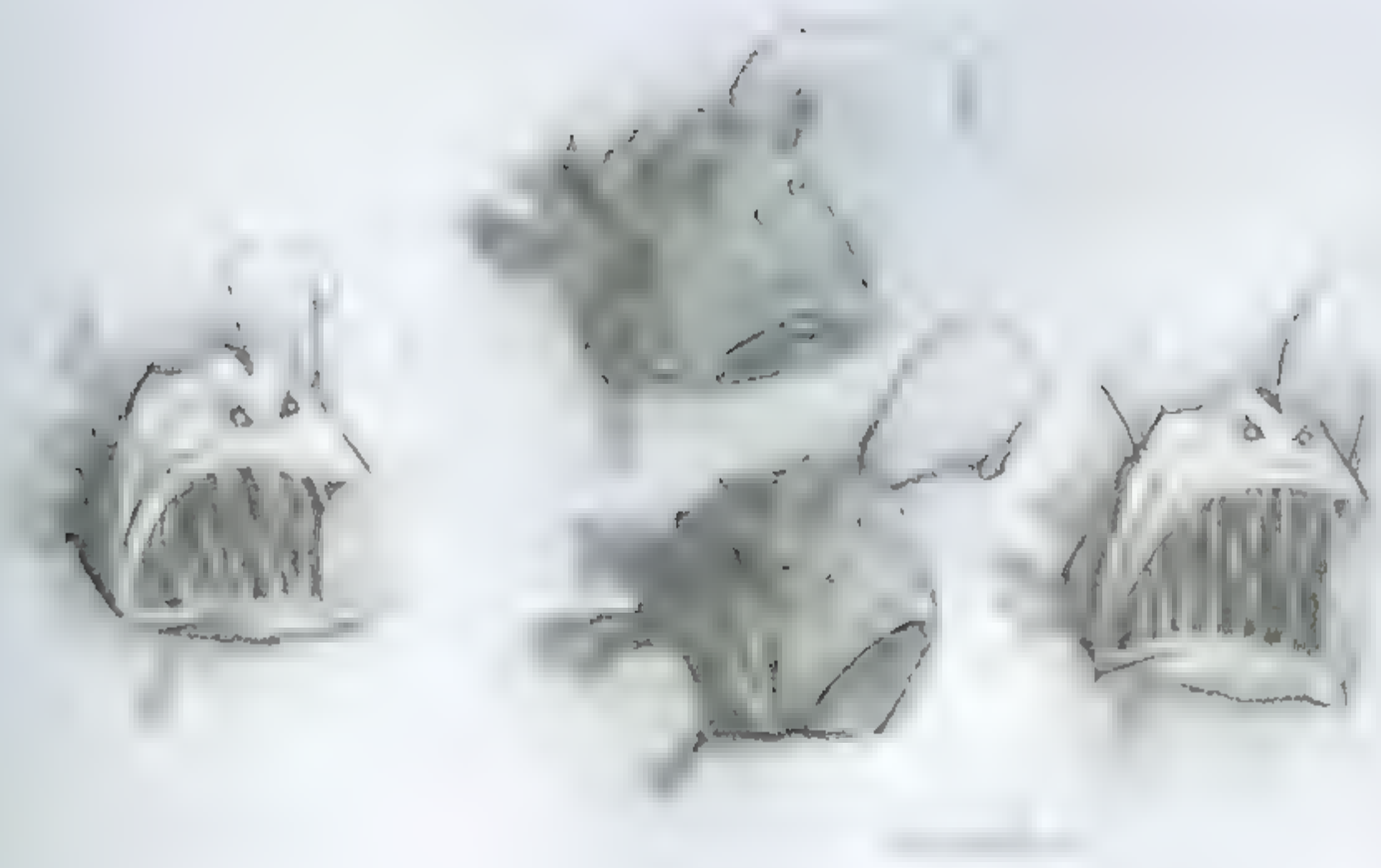
Carter Goodrich

Peter de Sève

Peter de Sève

Simon Varela
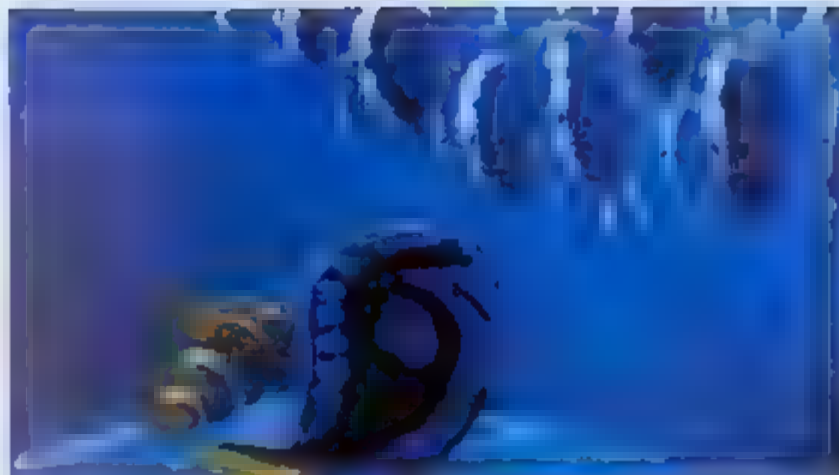
Andrew Stanton

Ralph Eggleston

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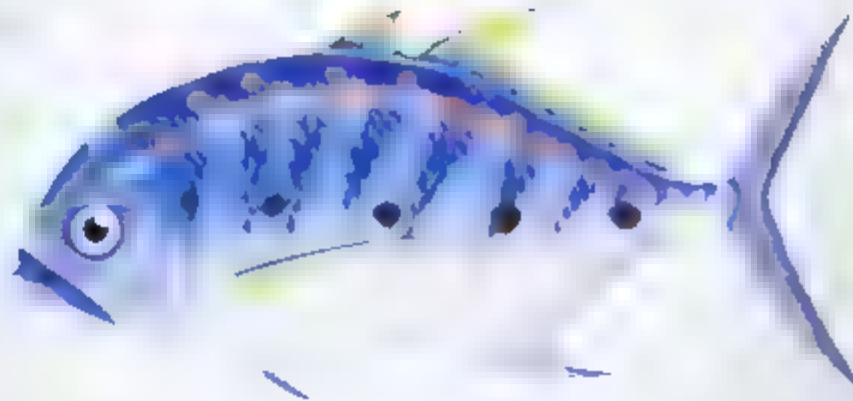
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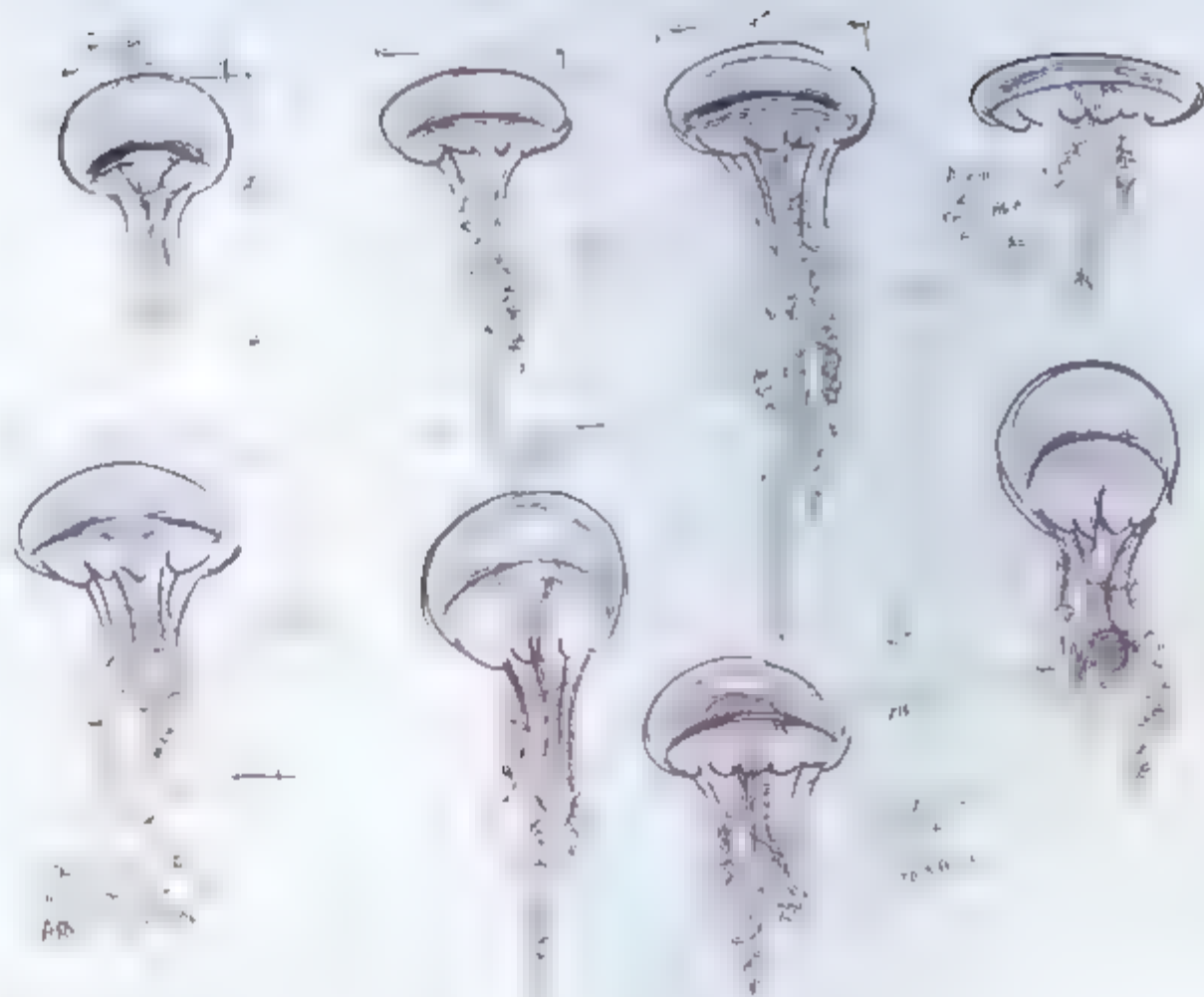
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David S. Fulp
marker and pencil 14 x 7
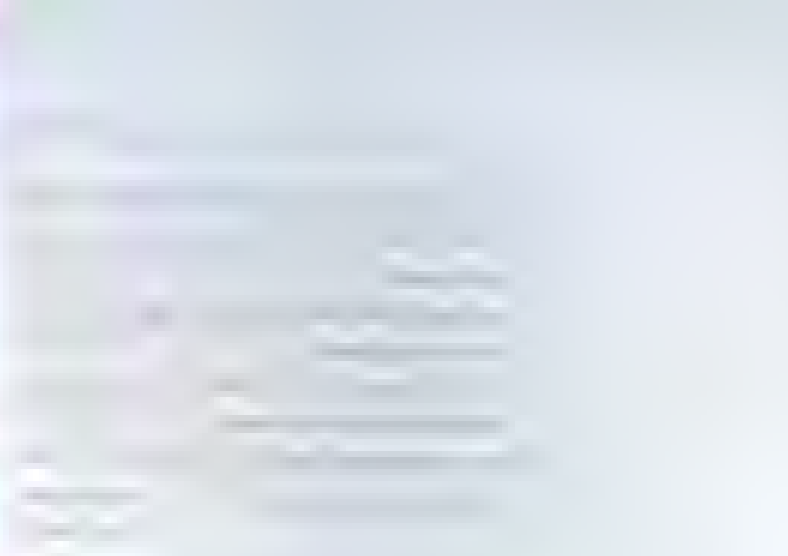
Rob n Cooper

above:
Bruce Zick

opposite
Bruce Zick

left
Jeff R chards
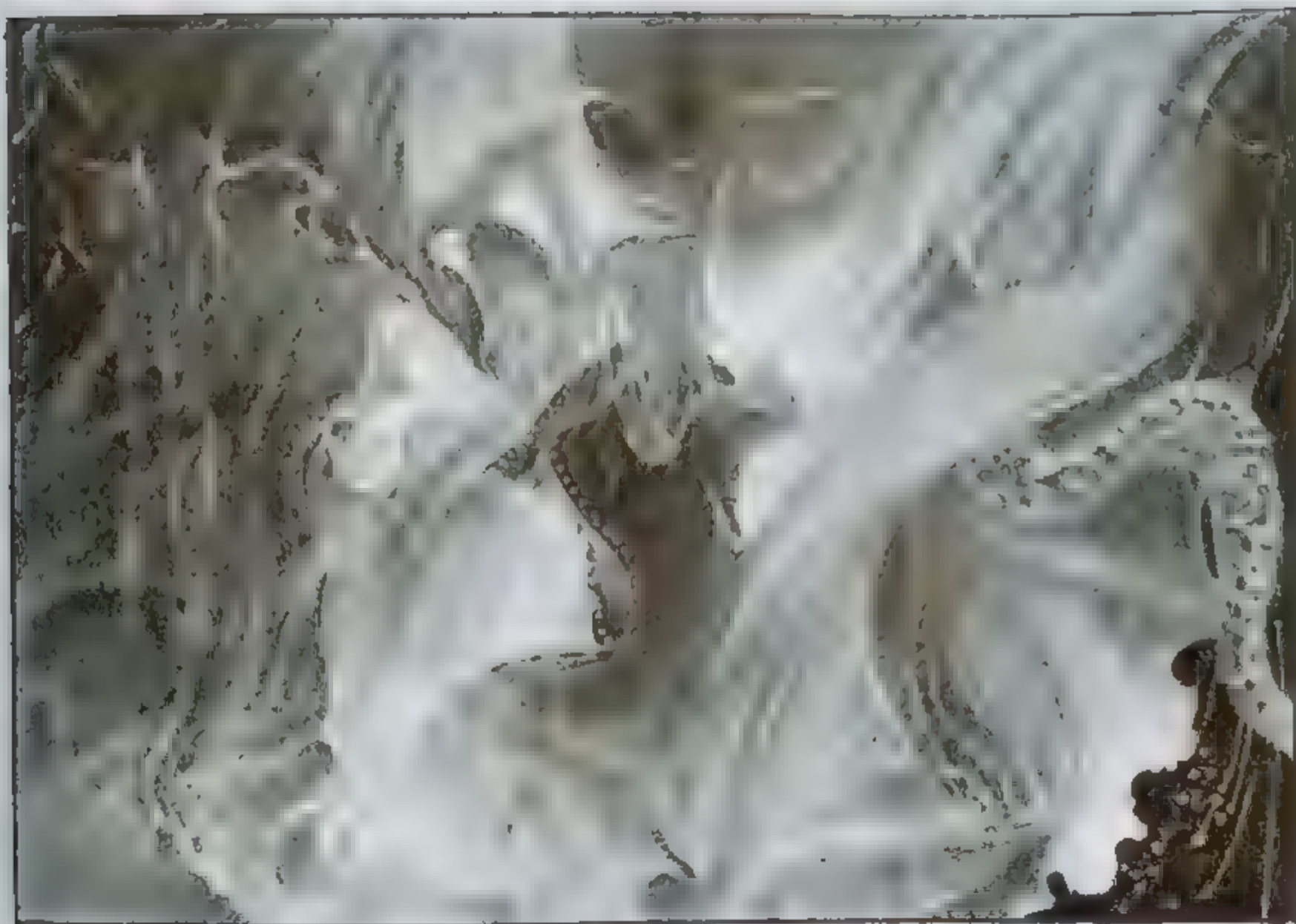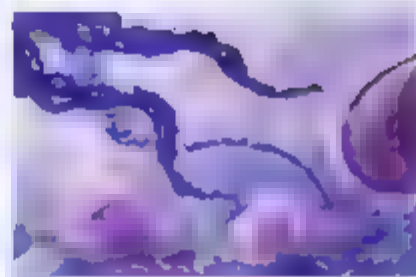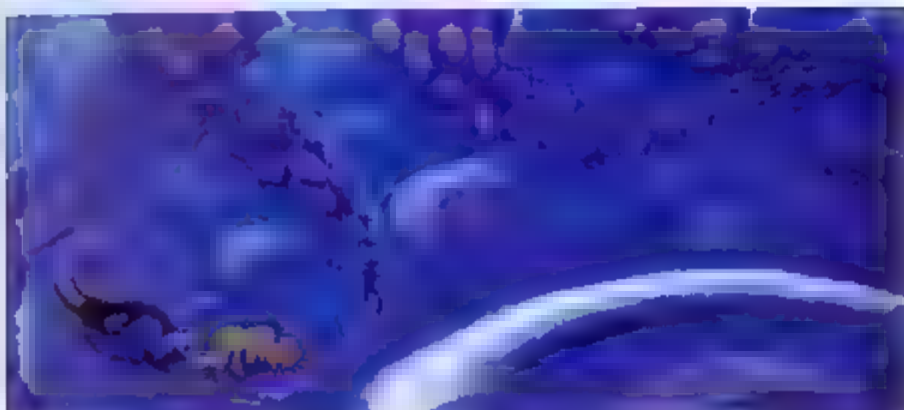
Ralph Eggleston

Oren Jacob
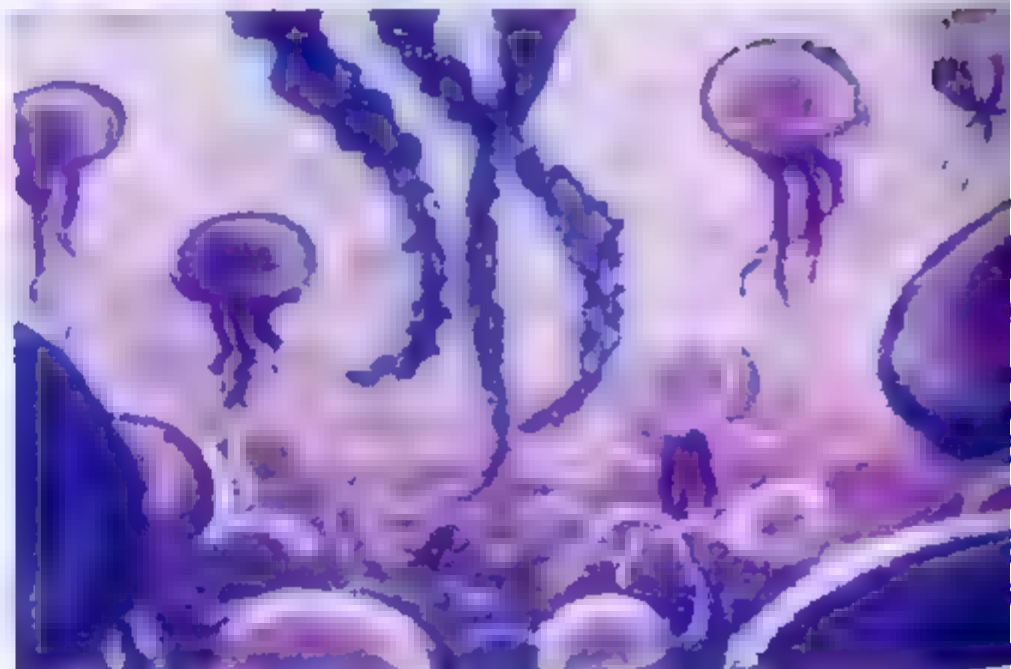
Ralph Eggleston
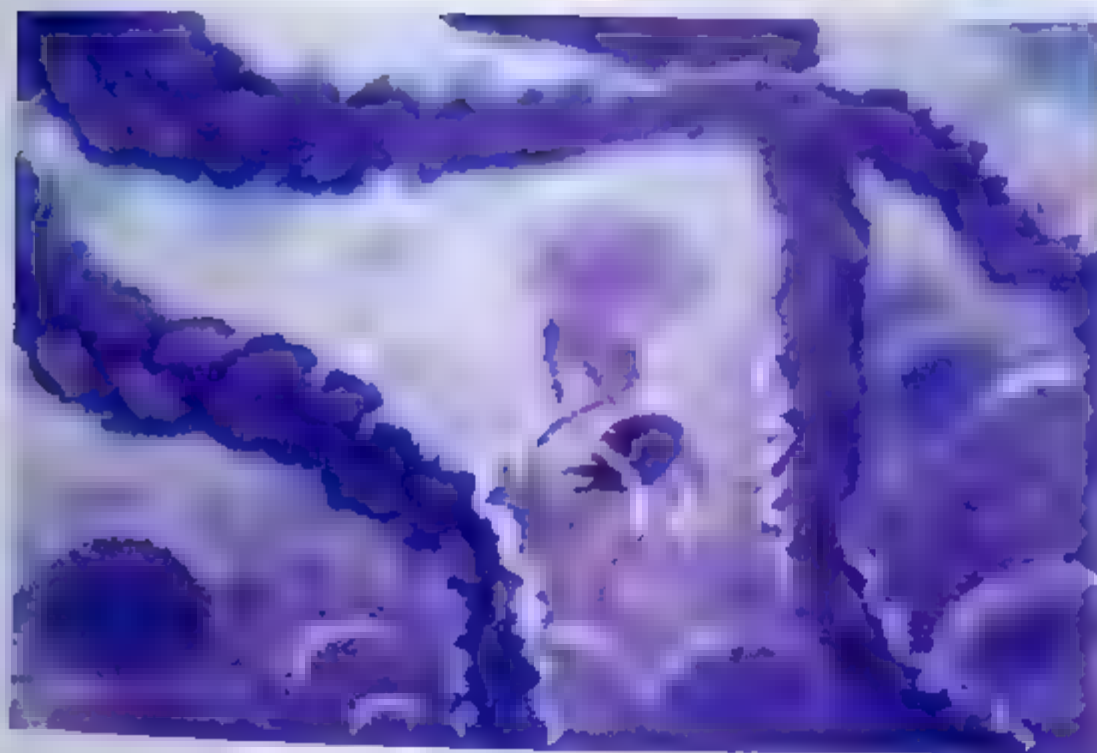
humor is the easiest to achieve, the heart is always the toughest, because you can't tell people to feel a certain way — they have to discover it for themselves. On the five films we've done here, what's important is making sure that character growth, for us, is where a lot of emotion comes from. And the bigger emotion plays with an audience, the bigger. But to get to that emotional heart, it takes time. You have to set things up in order to take people to a place where they're devastated. It's said — here we go.

John Lasseter
executive producer
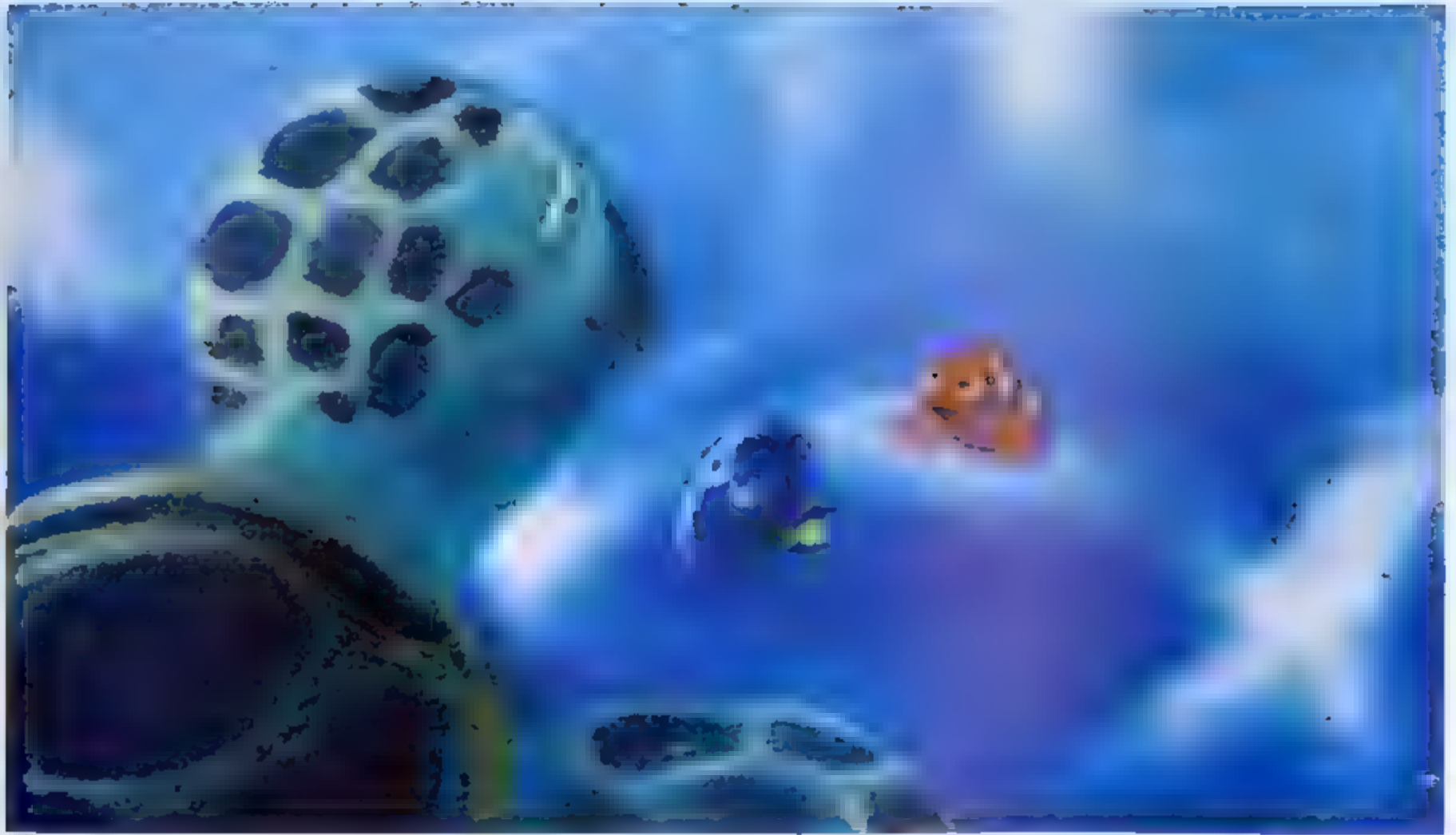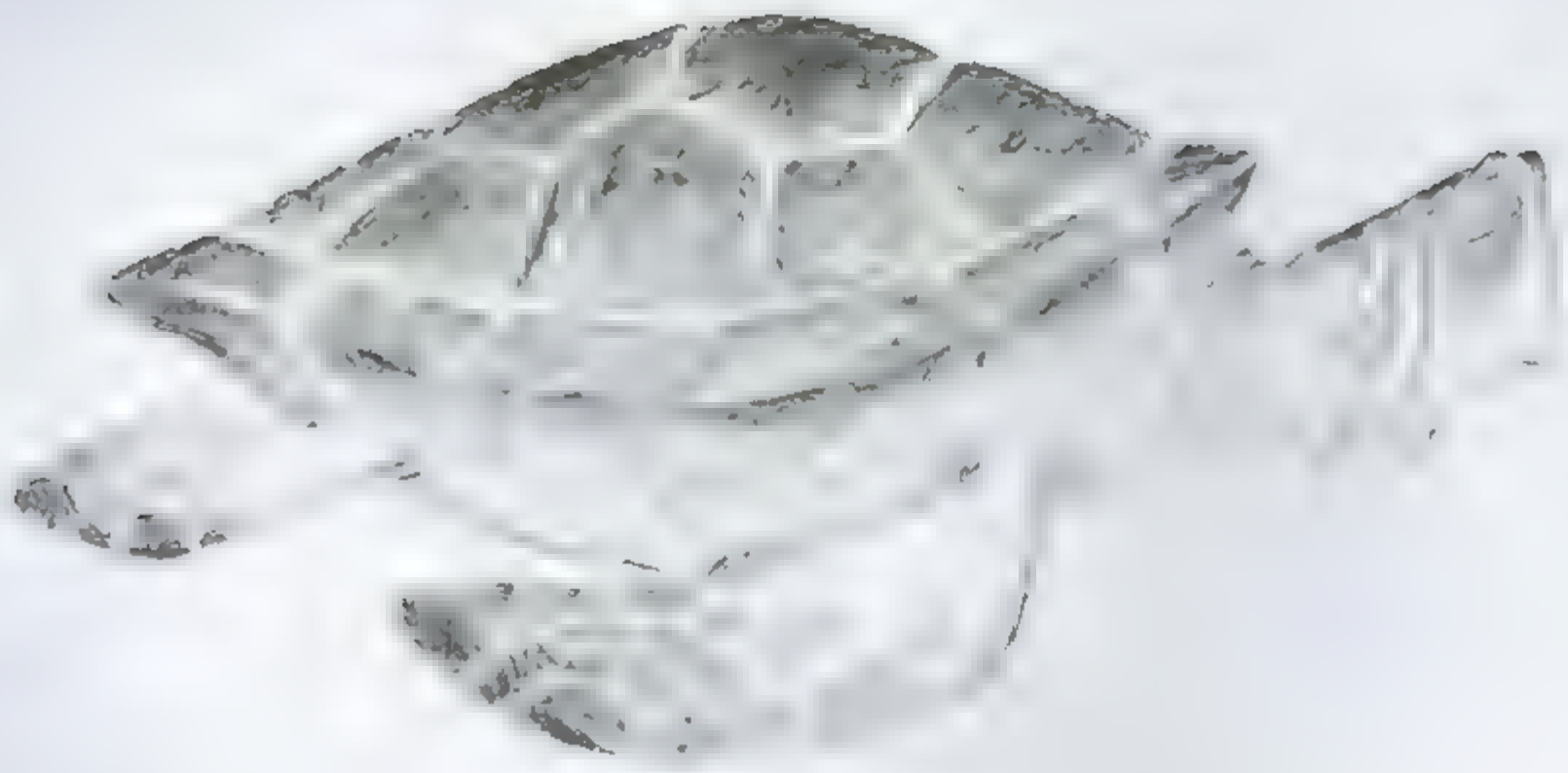
Ralph Eggleston

above:
Tony Fucile
pencil

opposite:
Peter de Sève
pencil
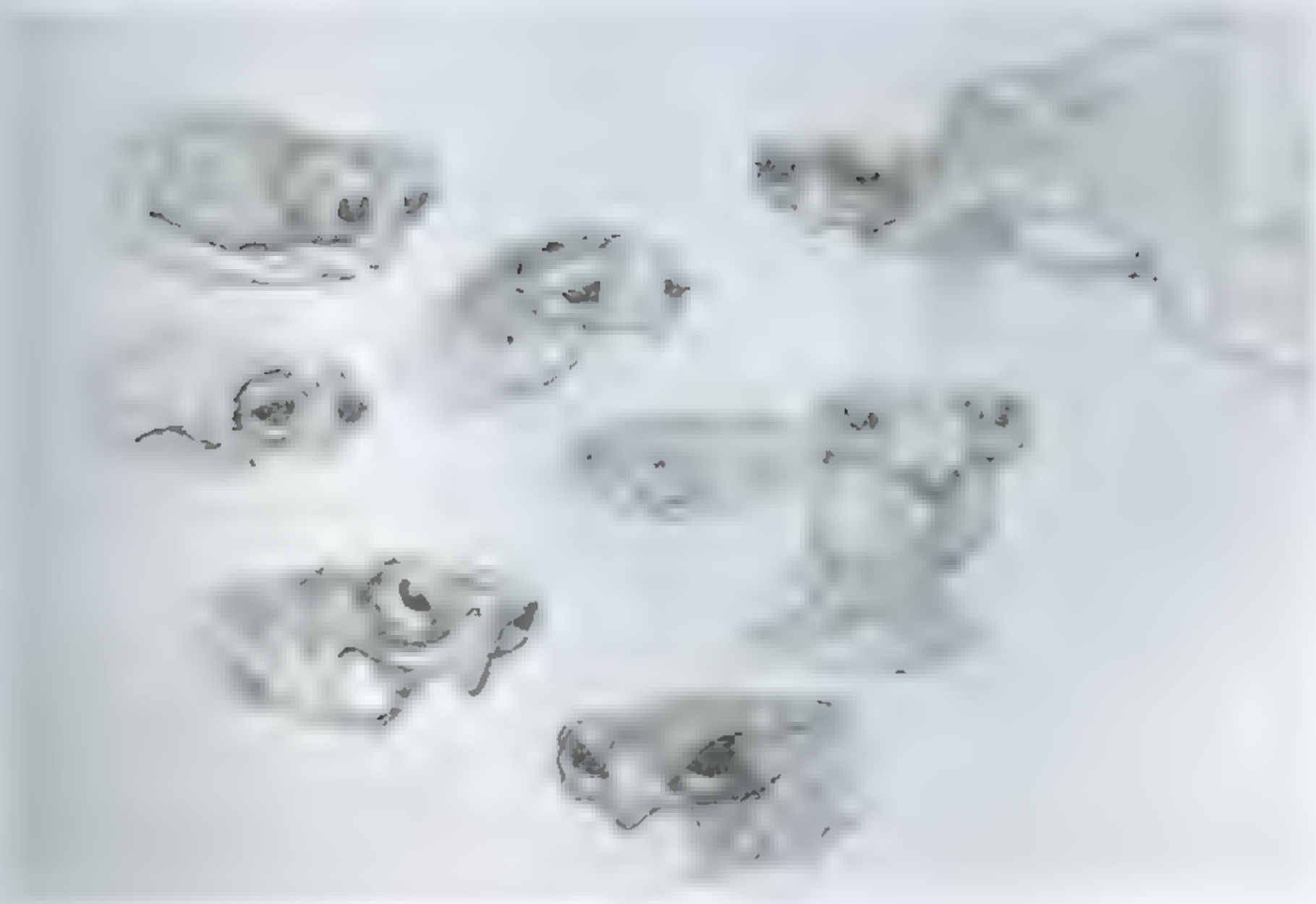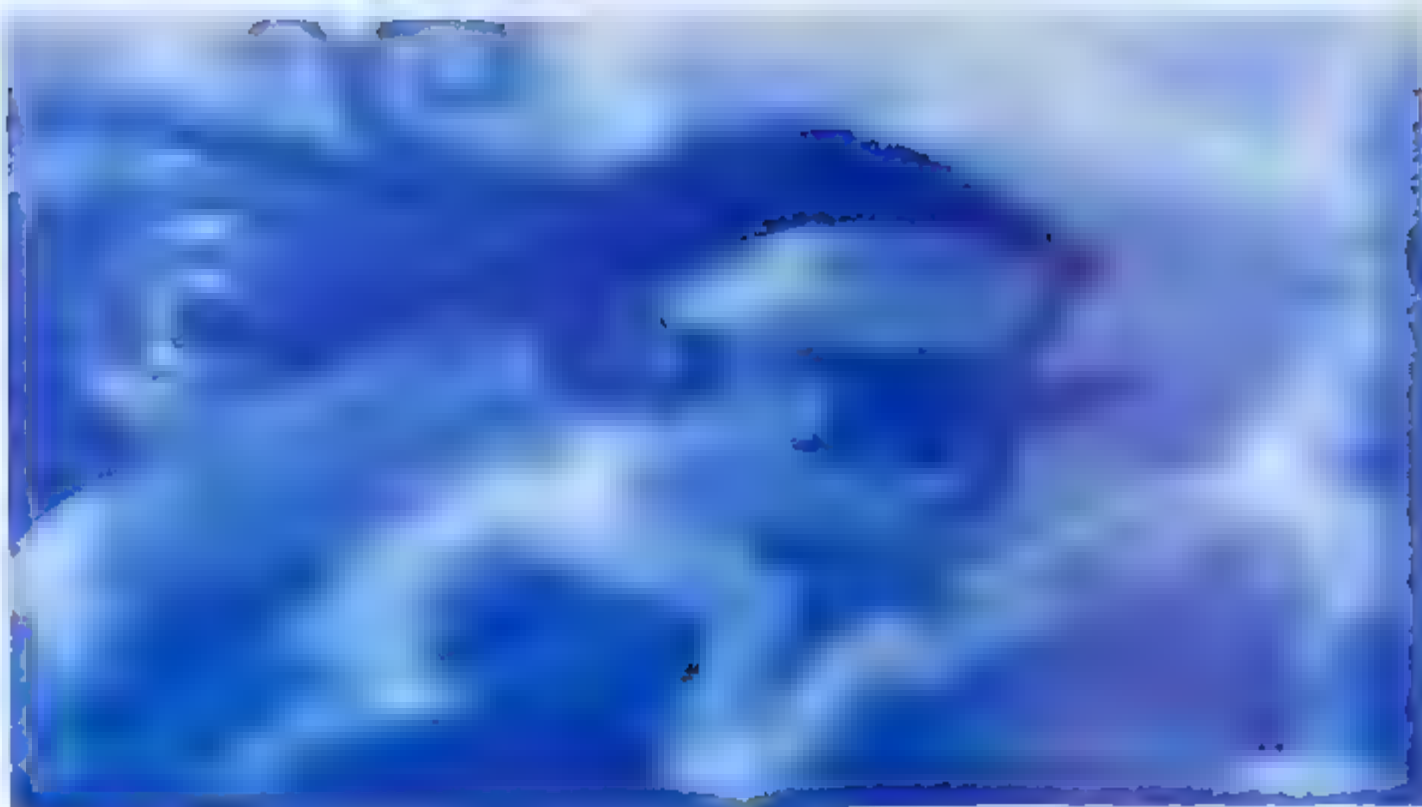
left
Joseph "Rocket" Ekers

above
Ralph Eggleston

right
Robin Cooper

Ralph Eggleston

A [illegible text] ... [illegible text] ... orange flower and her there was a [illegible text] look [illegible text] to find a bounce because so much [illegible text] A lot of these shells have a paisley to [illegible text] [illegible text]

Robin Cooper

above
Robin Cooper
Digital
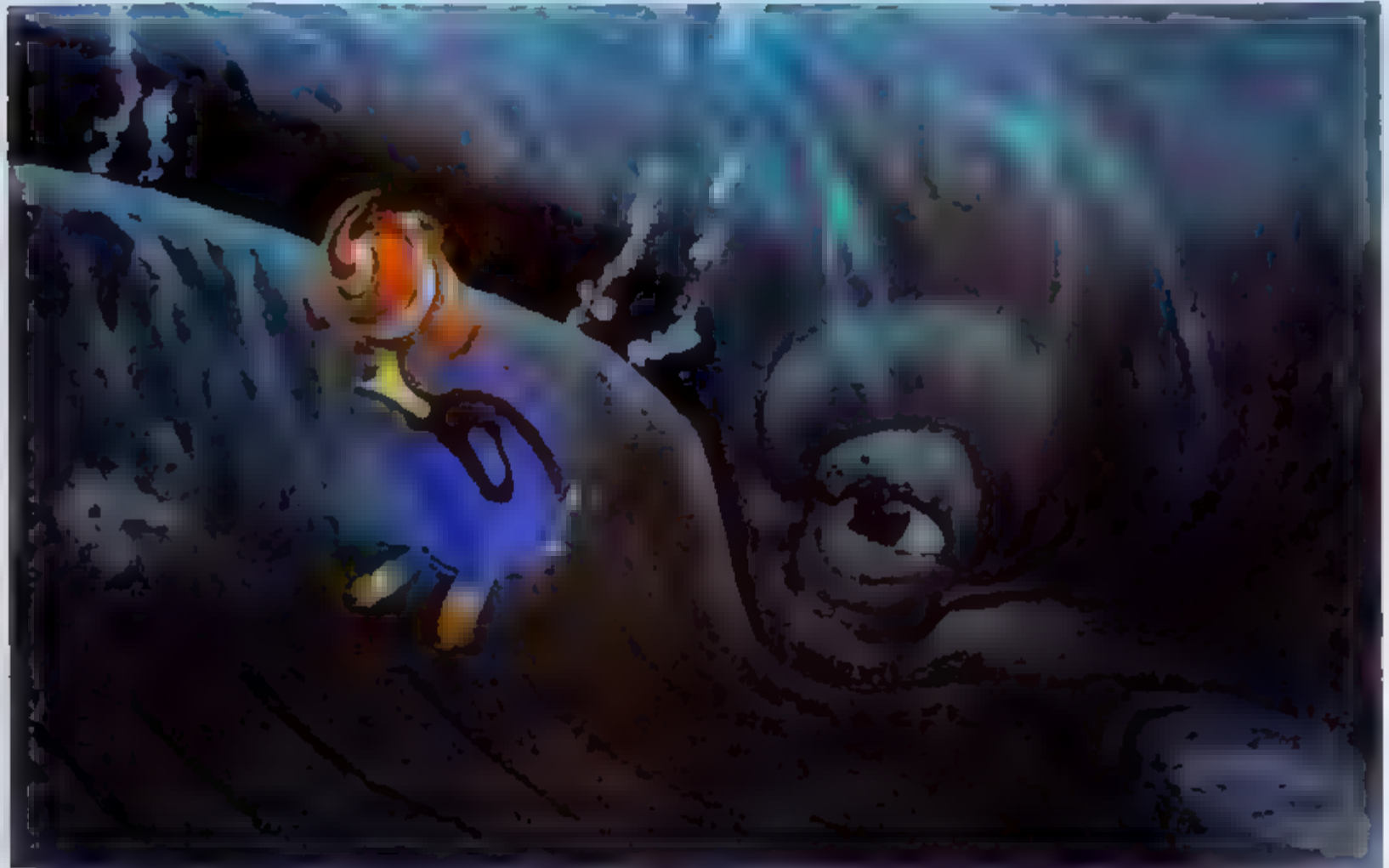
right
David S. Fulp
Marker Pen + T4

Ralph Eggleston

Sharon Calahan

3   THE TANK AND HARBOR

pages 98-99

Dom n que Lou s

Ralph Eggleston

Ra ph Eggleston

Bob Peterson

above
Joseph "Rocket" Ekers

right
Dominique Louis

Floating World

above

Joseph "Rocket" Ekers

below

Simon Vare a

Story
Laura Phillps

Color
Ricky Nierva

Marquette
Nelson Boho

Andrew Stanton

Nelson Bohol
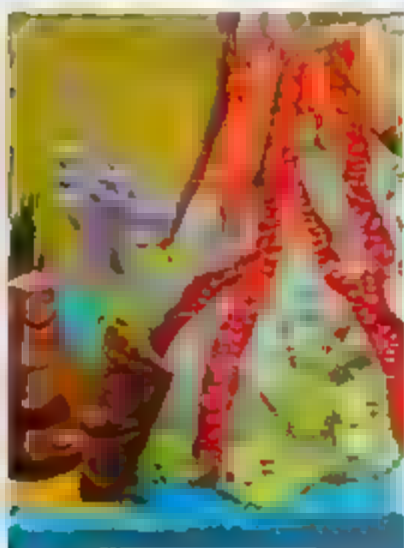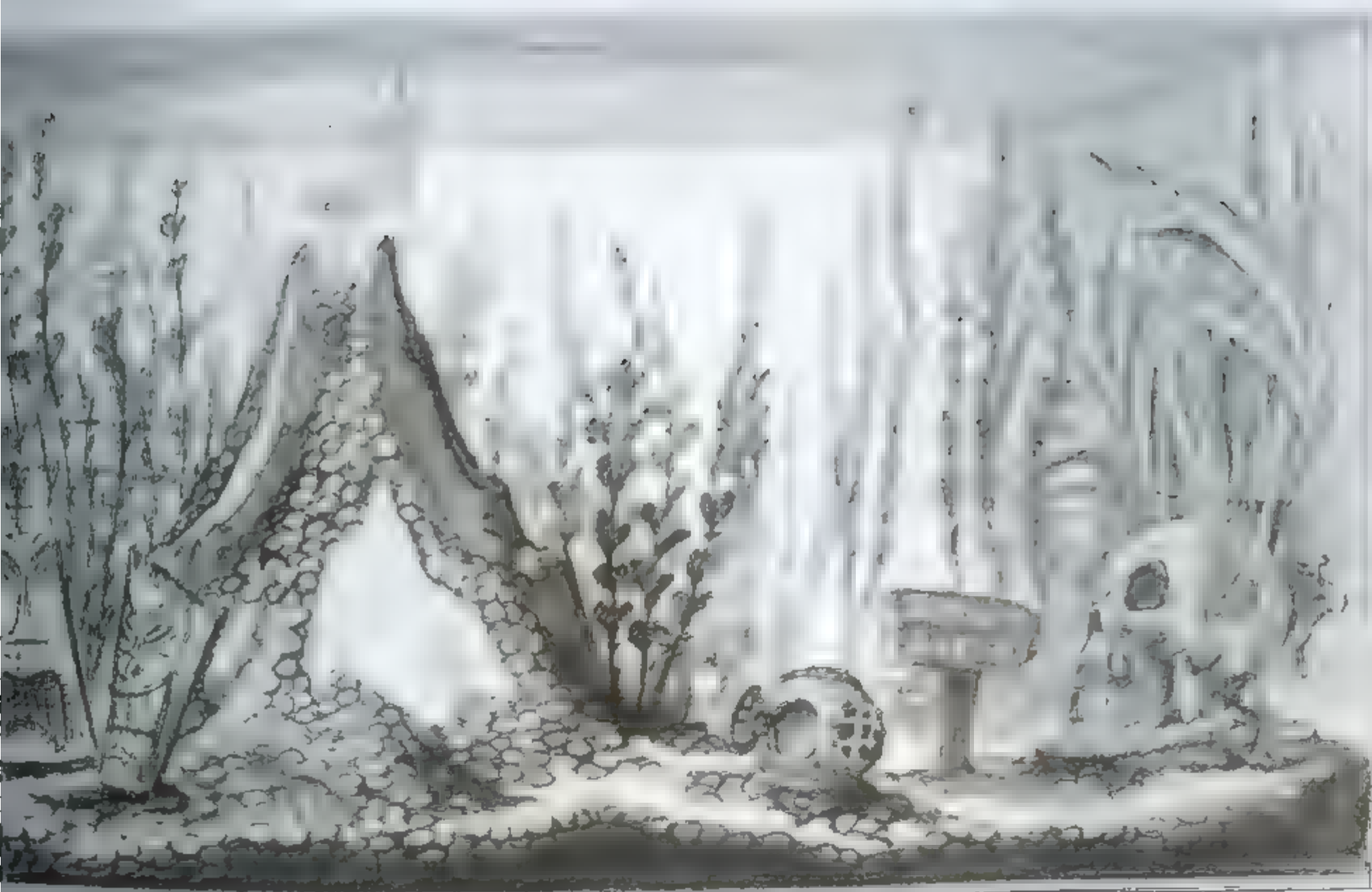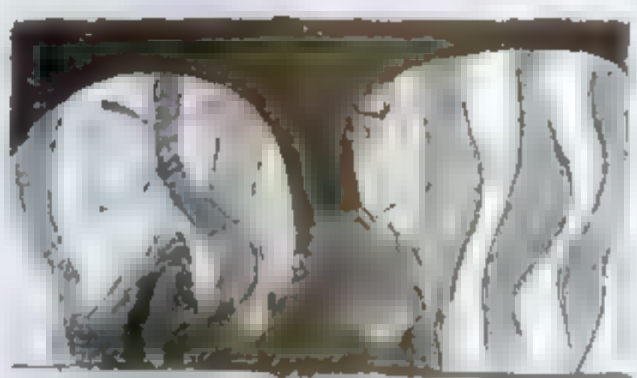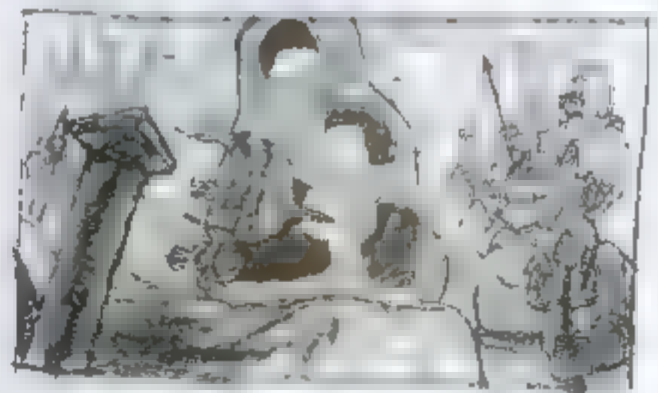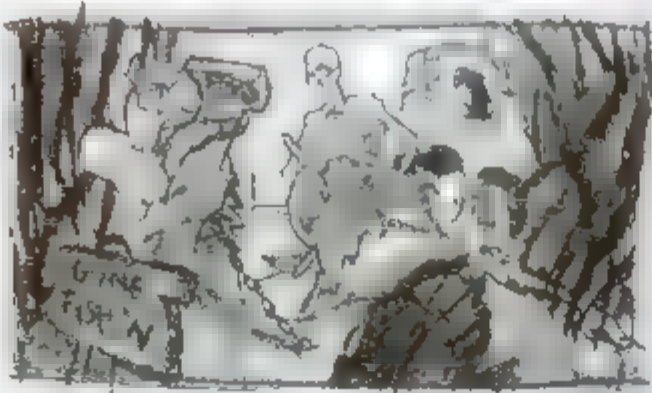
with
Pete Sohn

Ra ph Egg eston

fish-a man... ill who didn't talk a lot and was very mysterious. We just jammed on that. We gave Carl a beard... like Clint Eastwood and a mysterious scar—how did he get... proved with a scar... with his... was a new... older... how he's work over the script... finally how he look we did at... on my watch

Ricky Nierva

art... at... ...

Ricky Nierva

left

Peter de Seve

below left

James S. Baker

below right

Ricky Nierva

GiLL
JAMES S BAKER
MAR 30 2000

GILL

above:
Yvonne Hobbs

right:
Carter Goodrich

Jason Katz

top
Jason Deamer

top right
Peter du Sève

left
Ricky Nierva

Ricky Nierva

Belinda van Valkenburg

below
Bruce Morris

right
Dan Lee

Dan Lee
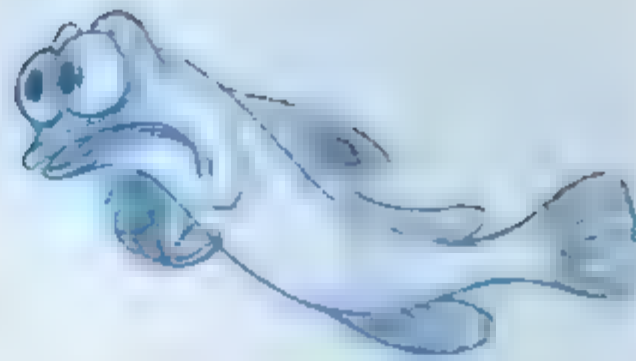
top right
Jason Deamer

bottom right
Jason Deamer

JACQUES
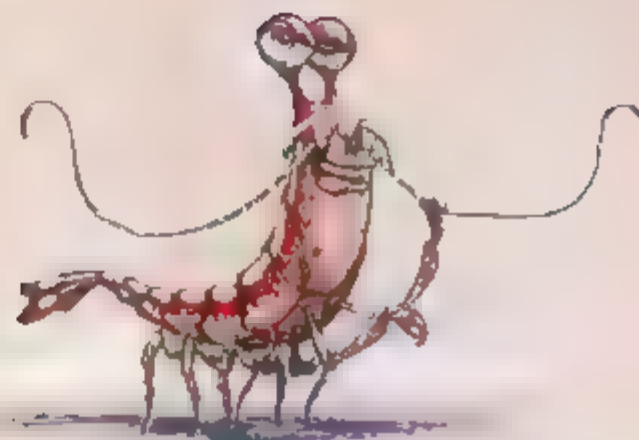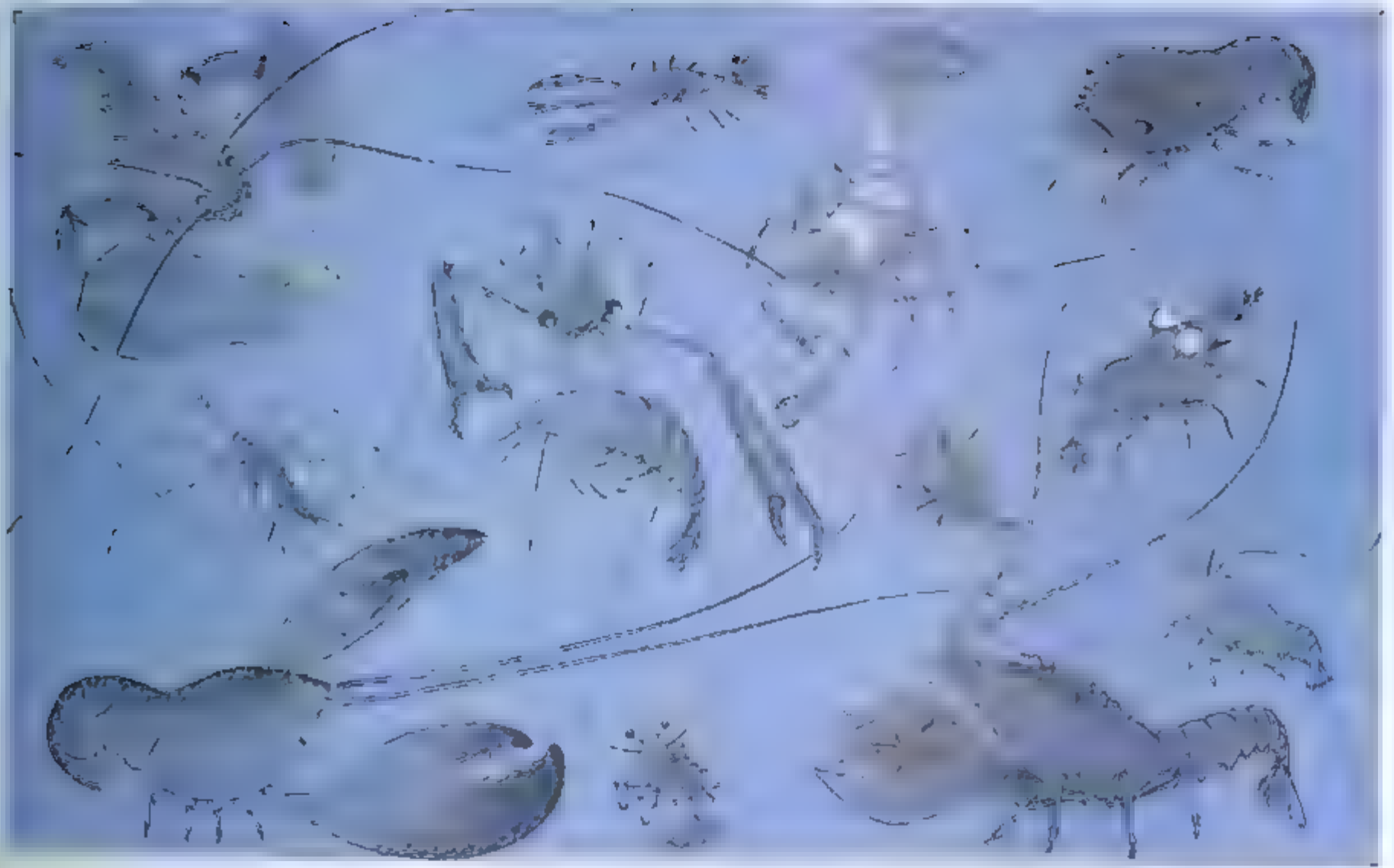
bottom
Carter Goodrich

Geefwee Boedoe
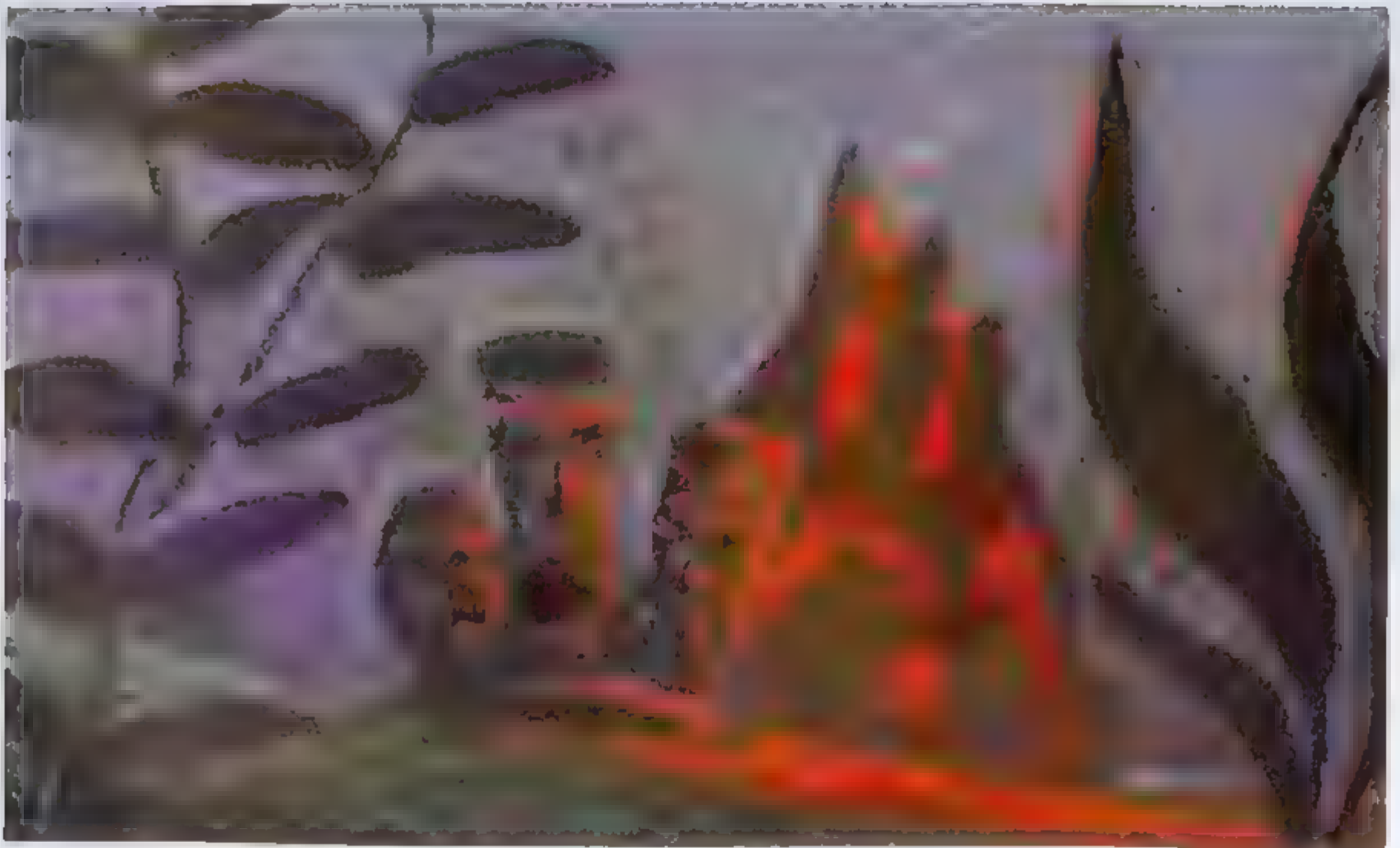
Ralph Eggleston
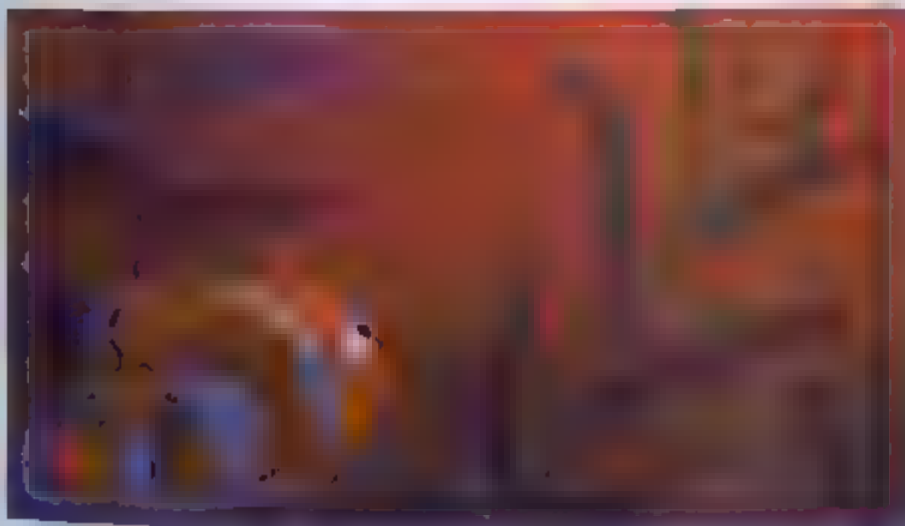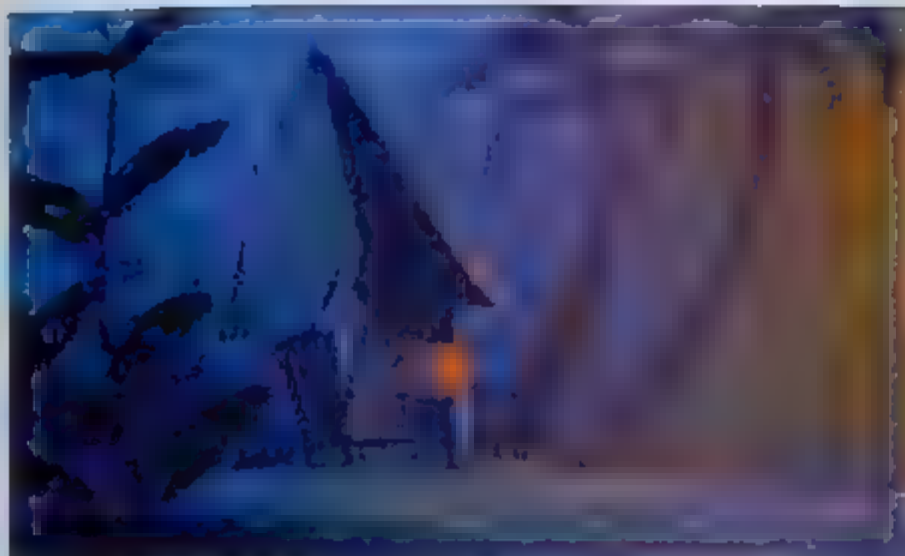
above
Ralph Eggleston

Dominique Louis

art by
Jason Katz
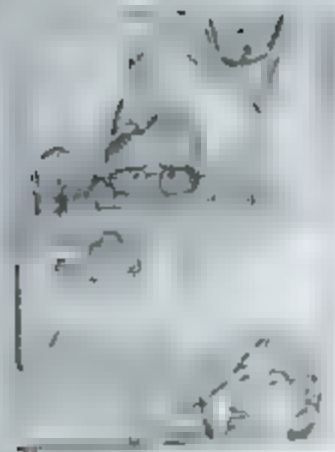
text
Dominique Louis
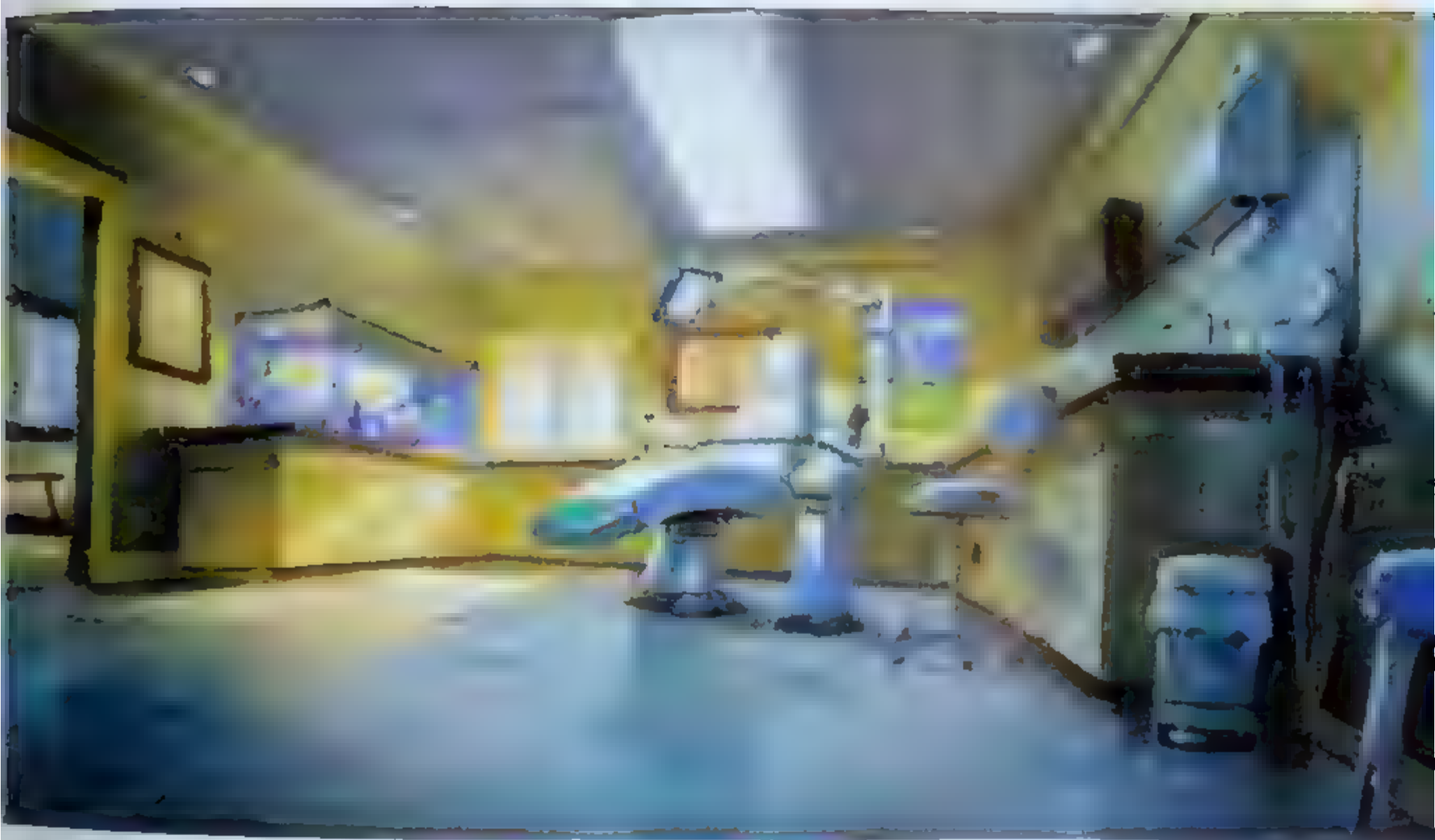
Dom n que Louis

Peter Sohn

Randy Berrett

Peter Sohn

Randy Berrett

Finding Nemo

the fish tank... from there she became the catalyst, the reason Nemo winds up in a... Now she has... and Darla is a fish-killer. So the fish gang is anticipating this psycho kid... she's the ticking time bomb. Ricky Nierva and I kept playing with designs for Darla. There were gag sessions with Andrew and the guys and ideas for Darla... having her wearing the old-fashioned head gear from the 19...s to head braces in her mouth. In story I'd board up Darla and then go over to the art department and help design her... even did a sculpt of her head. It's so fun to make an evil...

Peter Sohn
story artist, designer

 left

Bruce Morris

storyboard

pencil and marker

The artist sees the ocean from the window of the new art office and it's so amazing there it is and we... this is... W... that they it was... in the area being... used in or... by... when it is most... in... years art. Man... has brought... it... as... restless wore to... the land... within the... we... and that would be the spirit... only... also it took for it... be... two in a bag they... ... ... watching and... turning the waves aside when and... all away... the... below... leaves of the... below... and to... and... ... love... ... the ocean. Again... and... be that... or... the... of... movie it was A... struggling to live... in... implicitly safety and... making. Or are you... might... like... and... may be... only by doing so are you...

above
Ronnie del Carmen

right
Ronnie del Carmen

Ronnie del Carmen

story sketch

Ralph Eggleston

Ralph Eggleston

opposite
Anthony Christov

above
Bruce Zick

right
Nelson Boho

right
Bruce Z ck

below
Ne son Boho
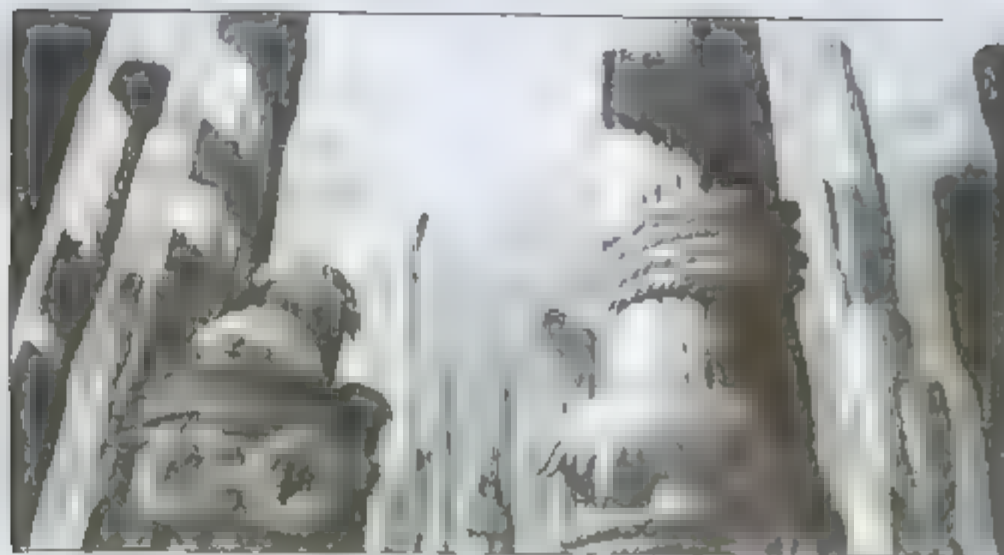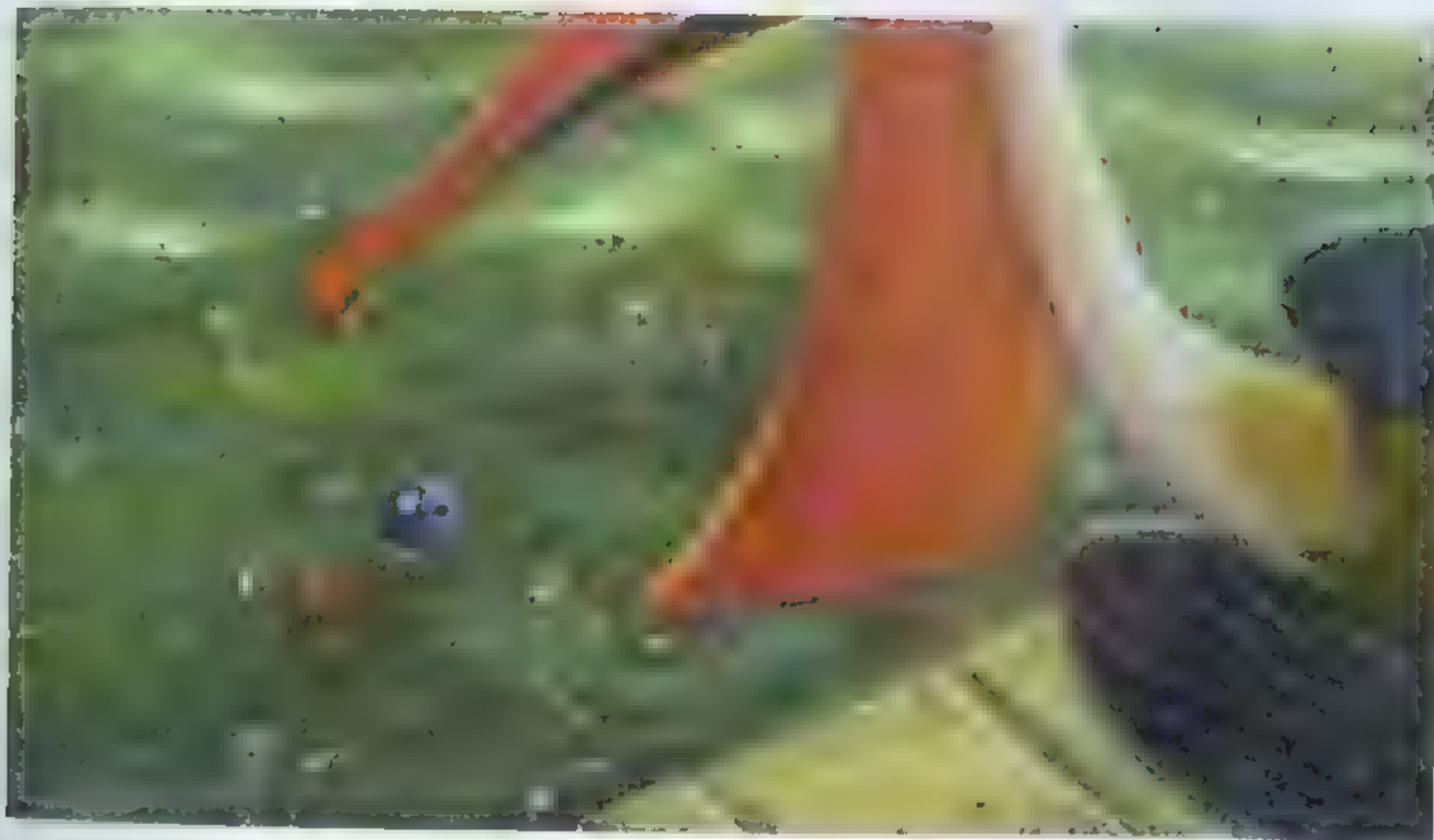
Ralph Eggleston

top left

Geefwee Boedoe

bottom right

Geefwee Boedoe

right

James S. Baker

left:
Geefwee Boedoe

below right
Geefwee Boedoe

Ralph Eggleston
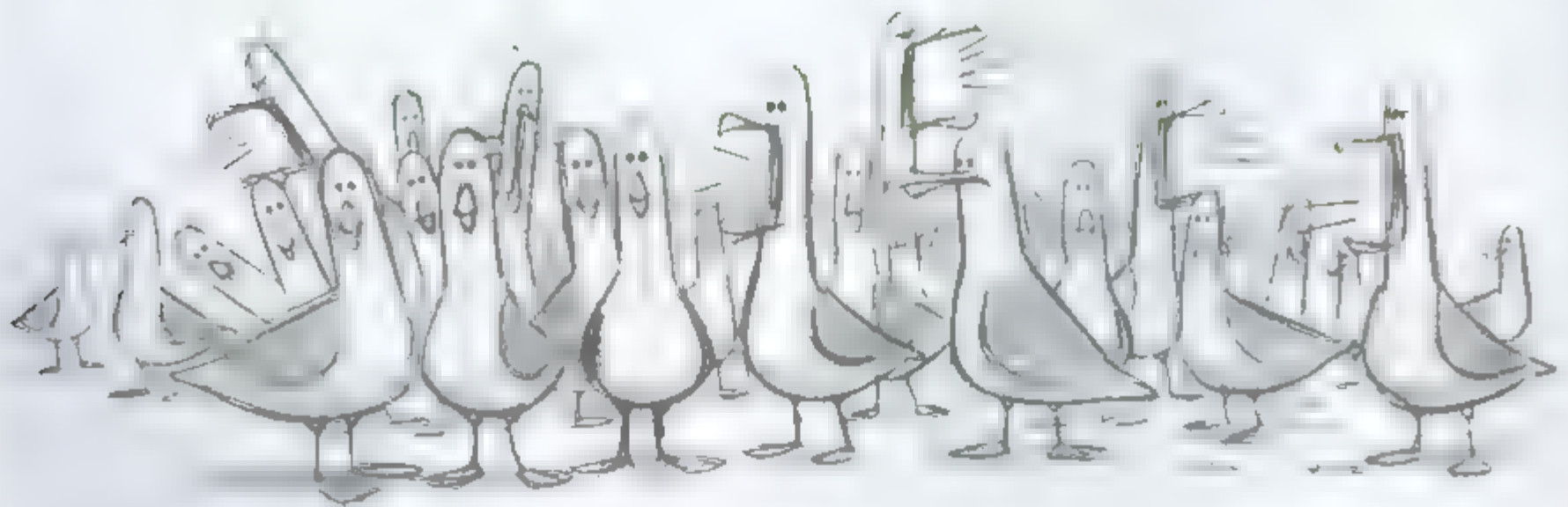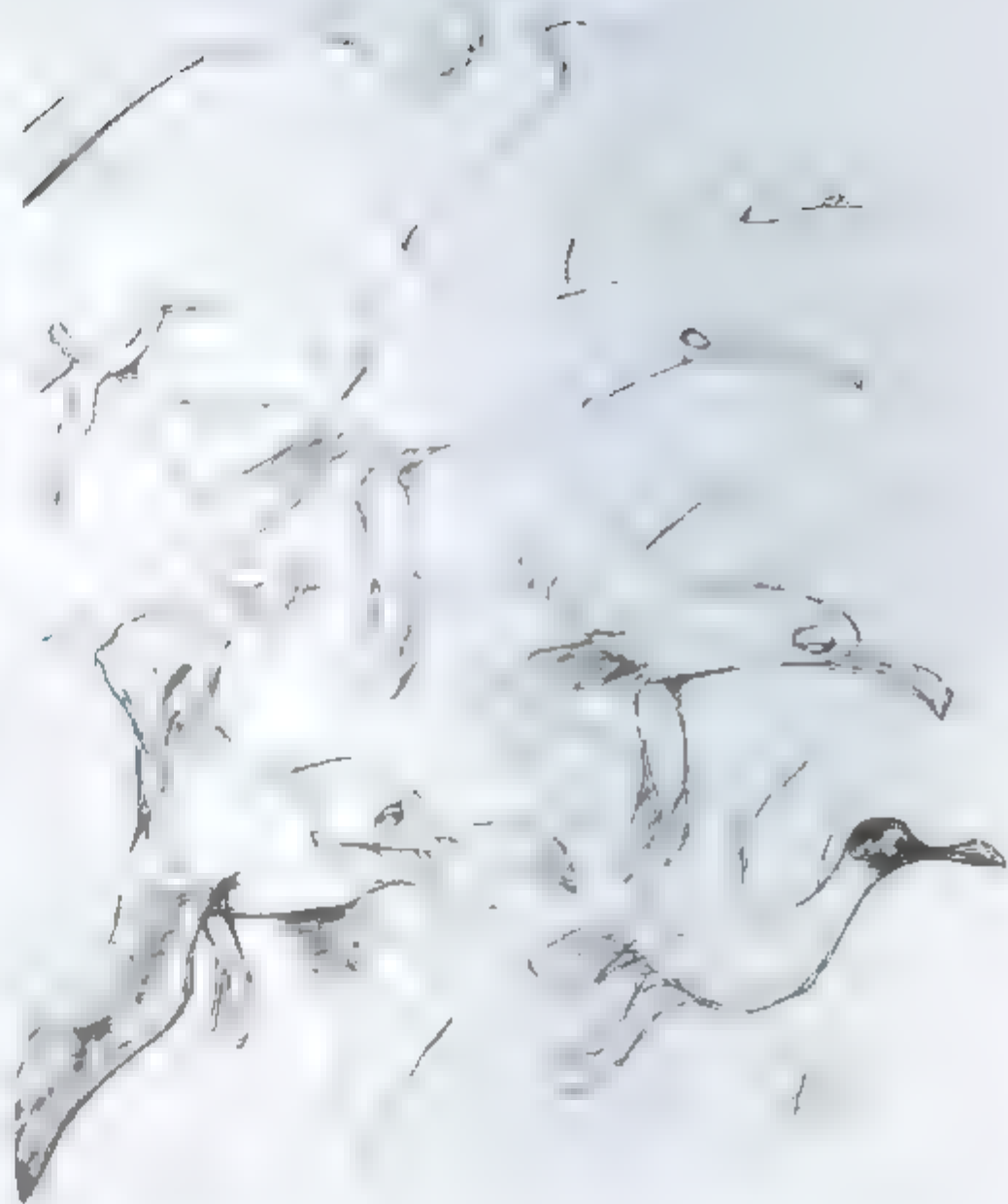
Jason Deamer

Anthony Christov

Anthony Christov

Anthony Christov

Anthony Christov
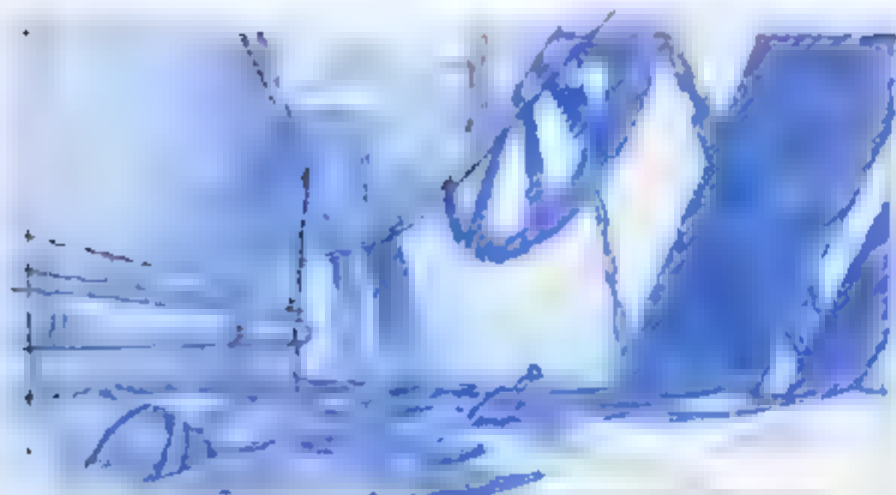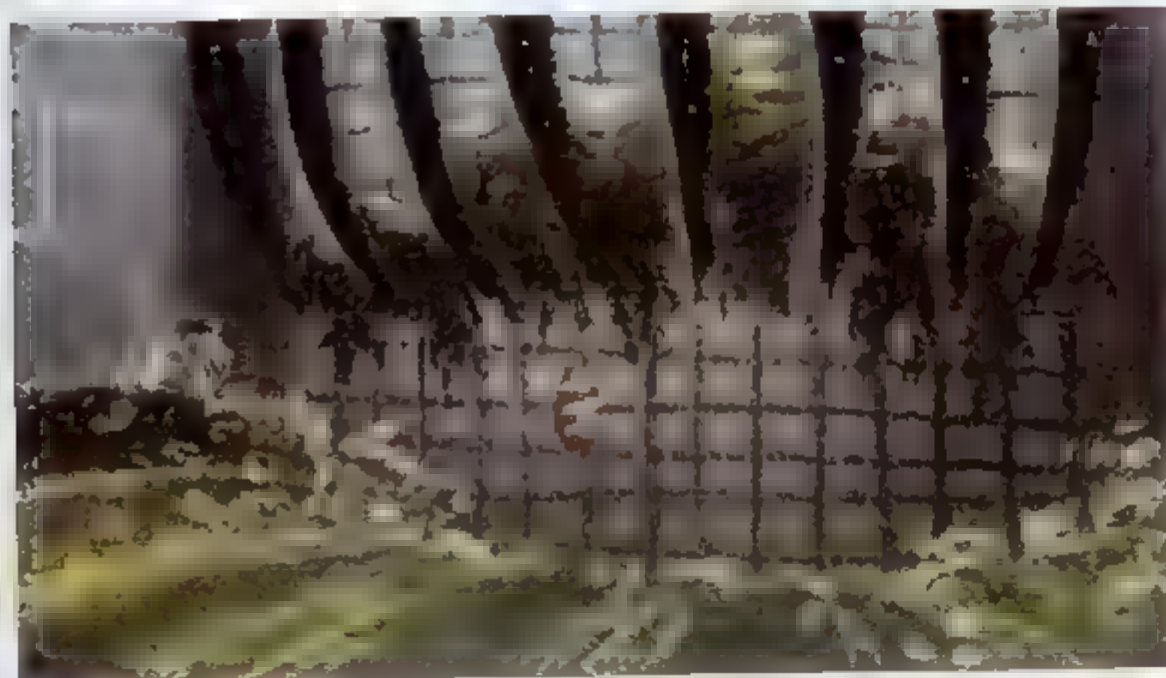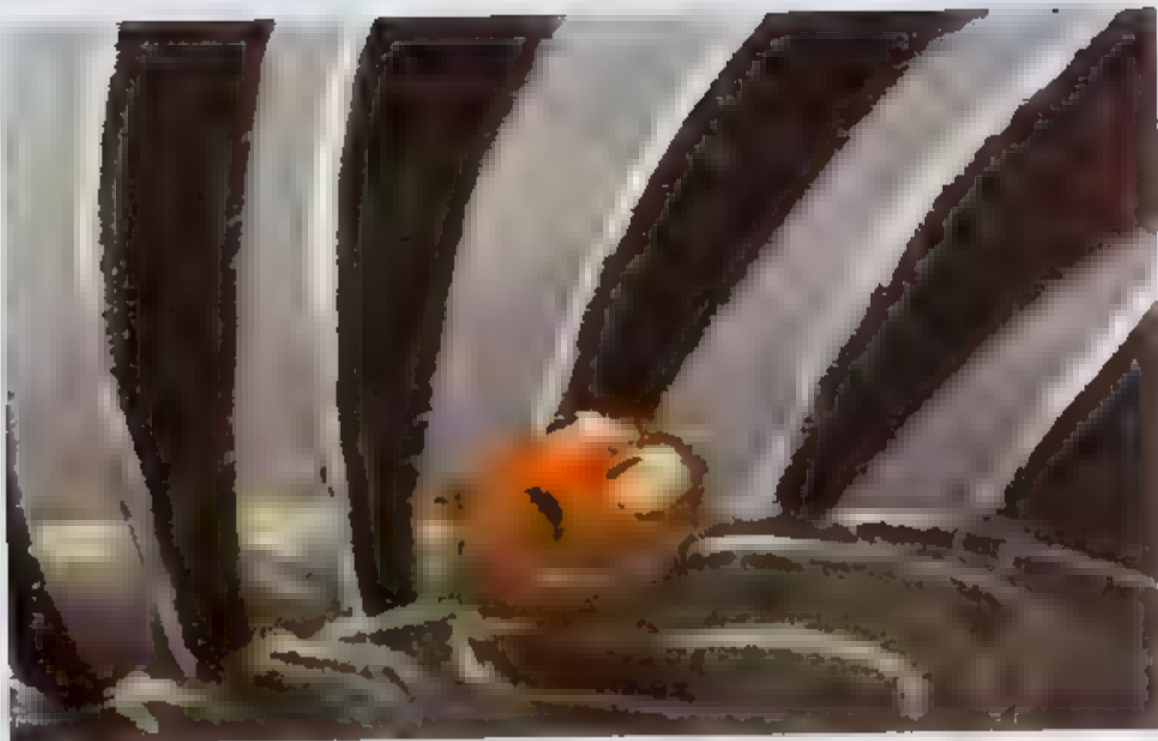
John Lasseter

Ralph Eggleston

bottom
Ralph Eggleston

above left

Ralph Eggleston
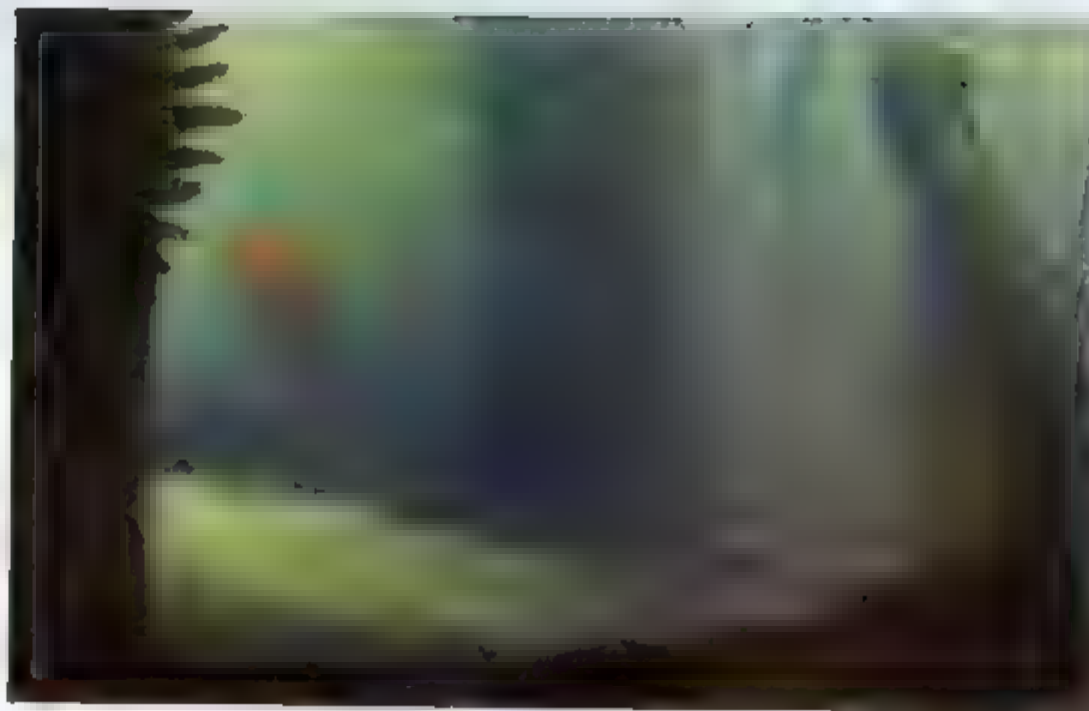
above right

Ralph Eggleston

left

Ralph Eggleston

right
Geefwee Boedoe

below
Ronnie de Carmen
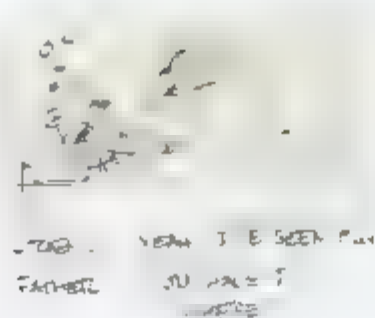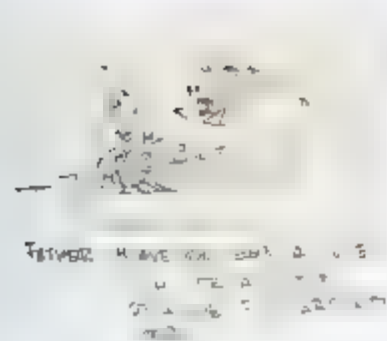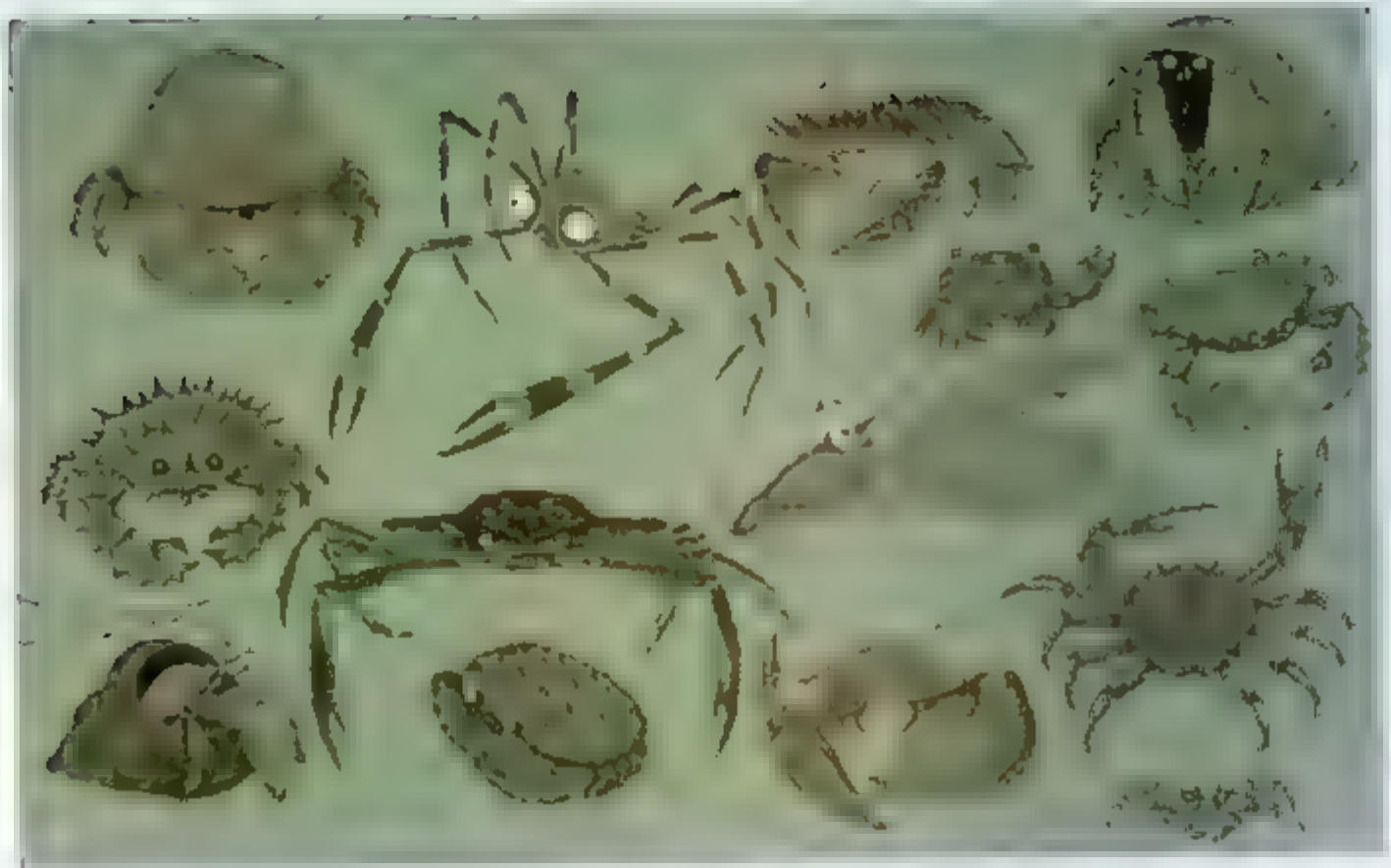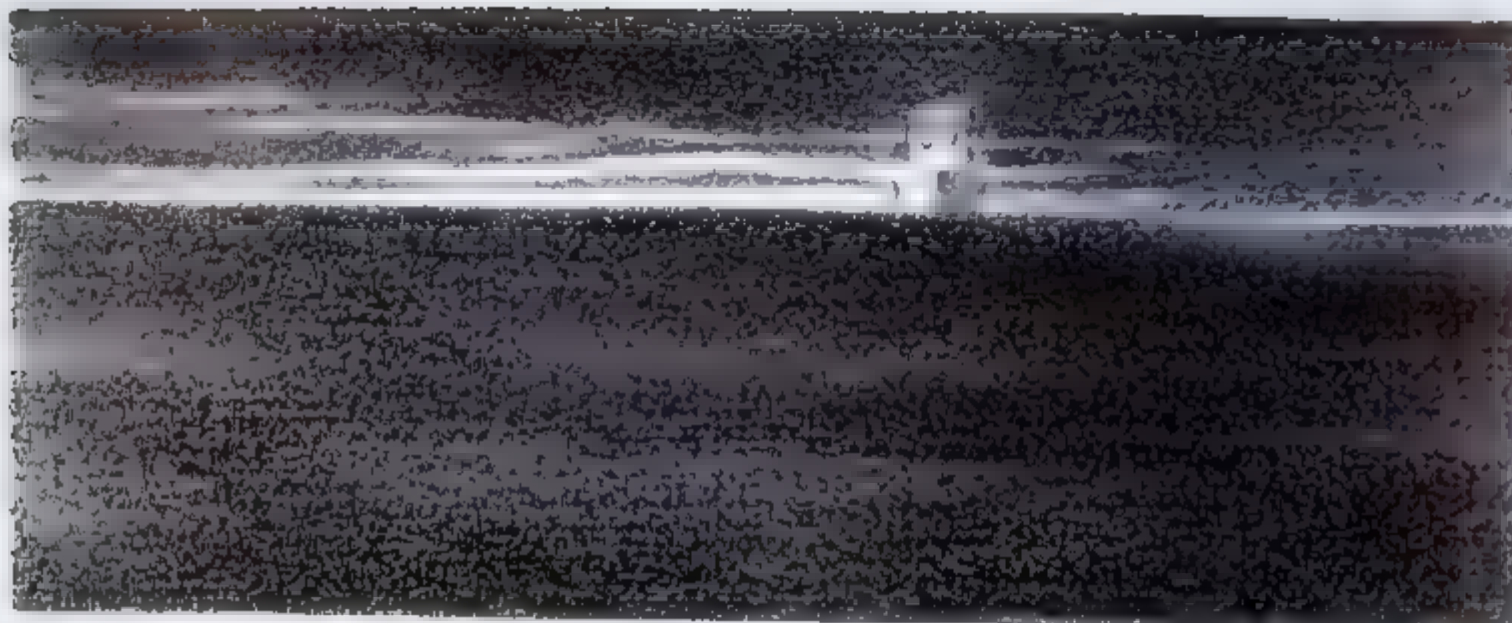
Anthony Christov

Anthony Christov

Lee Unkrich
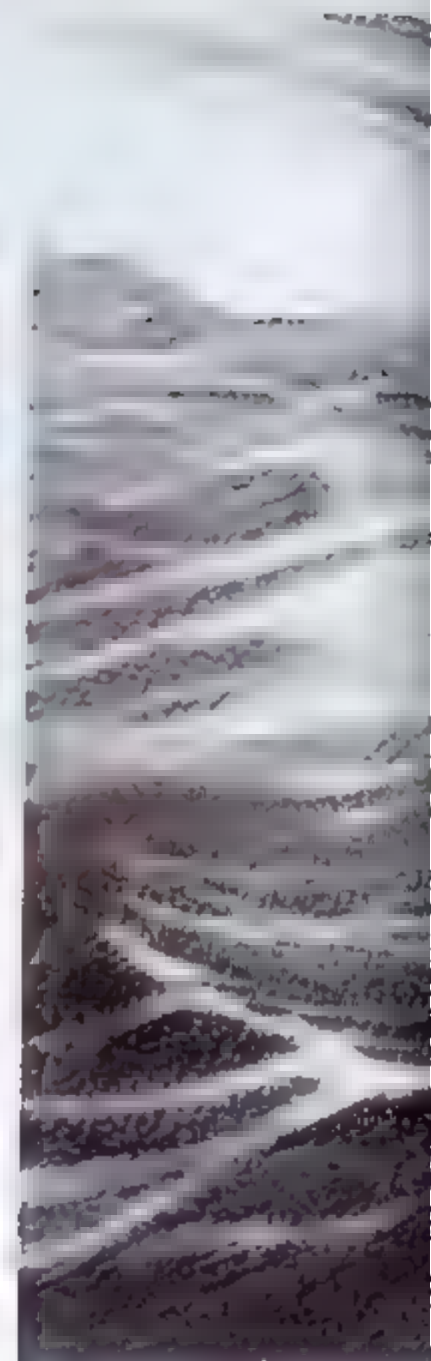
Bruce Zick
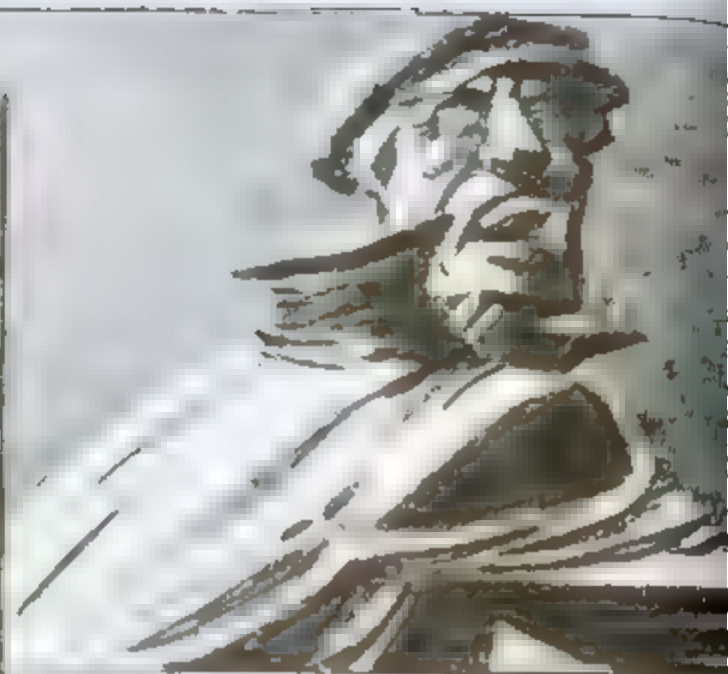
Anthony Christov

Oren Jacob

op
Ra ph Egg eston

above:
Ra ph Egg eston

151

Bruce Zick

above
Bruce Zick

opposite
Bruce Zick

Lee Unkrich

Dan Jeup

Ra ph Eggleston

Ra ph Eggleston

Peter Sohn
storyboard
pen and marker, 4½ x 2½